August 28, 1939.

To Jim.

In memory of my
beloved brother
Dr John J. Mangan

Sincerely yours,

Anna D. Mangan

LIFE, CHARACTER, AND INFLUENCE OF DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

VOLUME ONE

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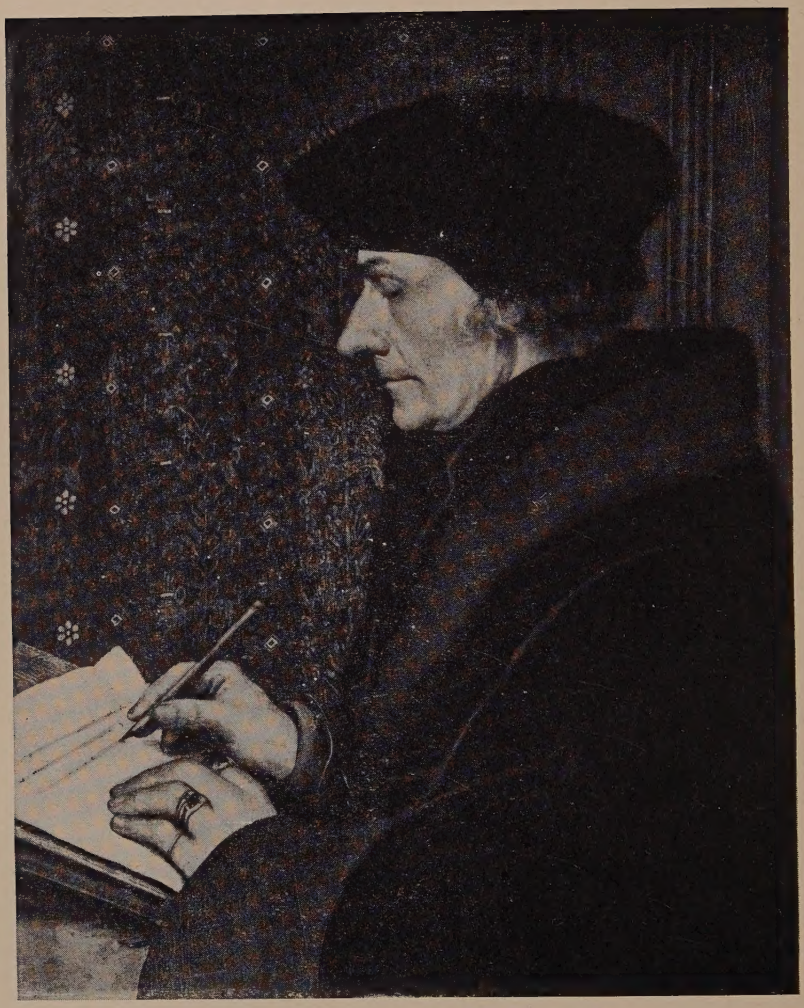

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS
Holbein

LIFE, CHARACTER & INFLUENCE
of
DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

Derived from a Study of His Works and Correspondence

BY

JOHN JOSEPH MANGAN, A.M., M.D.

VOLUME ONE

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TO THE MEMORY OF

MY FATHER

OWEN PETER MANGAN

PREFACE

In writing the history of any man who has achieved greatness through the influence he has exerted on his own or succeeding generations, we must guard against injecting into the investigation our own preconceived ideas, prejudices, predilections, or antipathies; any of which must necessarily prove fatal to an unbiased judgment. This is especially true of such a variously estimated man as Erasmus. I will state at once that I have no special thesis to prove, no speculative hypothesis to substantiate, and that any conclusions which I derive from the facts of Erasmus' life and writings are presented to the reader for his own valuation of their worth, his own estimate of their importance; for only thus can I hope to escape the charge of having emphasized certain facts too much, or of having minimized others unnecessarily. That such has never been my intention I ask the reader to believe; and I cordially invite him to employ his own judgment whenever mine does not seem to him to be in accord with the facts. It is essential for truth, the irreducible minimum in any historical work, that the personal beliefs of the writer shall not enter into the matter in the slightest degree. Leo XIII gave such a demonstration of regard for historical accuracy when, in throwing open the treasures of the Vatican Library to Ludwig Pastor, he admonished him not to deviate from the truth even in the interests of the Church. How difficult it is to achieve such impartiality the world well knows but all too rarely remembers, so that often in the very best historical work impartiality is only a relative term.

Before I had ever set myself the task of studying the life of Erasmus, I used to have the concept that he was a man of stern aspect and rugged worth, who sat unmoved while all Europe rocked in the storm of religious hatreds engendered by the contest of Luther with the Papacy. I pictured him as sitting in mid-Europe administering with Jovian decision and Rhadamanthine sternness well-merited reproof and blistering reprobation to both sides in the controversy: Justice herself could not be more cold or unyielding than he appeared to me then to be. And this I find to be the generally accepted picture of him.

But the facts, as they have been left to us by himself, and which I have here gathered together in compact form, give us an Erasmus far different from this imagined one. Jove and Rhadamanthus, with their supernal and awe-inspiring presence, disappear from the scene, and in their stead there emerges a little man, infirm in health, querulous in manner, fragile in figure, and unimpressive in personality—until he begins to speak, and the accents of his wonderful tongue are loosed to the ears of his enchanted listeners. Then is his spell cast over us. The meagre form and the neurotic temperament disappear in turn; the frail

body and pallid countenance are forgotten when the towering mind takes possession of our senses; and for the time being Erasmus sways us whither he will. With kindling zeal and stimulating enthusiasm he wins us wholly, as with classic phrase and felicitous quotation he brings back to us the elevated days of the Augustan era, not in forced or stilted words, but in a steady stream of happy allegory, vivid metaphor, and tropical allusion.

Behind the glamor of this talent we find that he was sickly almost all his life, and had in addition to bear the stigma of illegitimate birth under circumstances most galling to a man as sensitive as he, sensitive not as one in the fullness of health, but sensitive as is the neurasthenic, whose nerves are ever on edge, and who, turn he ever so often, can find no welcome rest. Yet although we learn that this charming person was no more august or perfect than the rest of us, the fact does not disenchant us, but serves, on the contrary, to relieve him of his aspect of a demigod, and brings him more within the scope of our understanding and sympathy. The Erasmus of our imagination is a figment only; the Erasmus of our informed understanding is really a man.

Now we are not to be unduly surprised if we find him not as other men, but intensely impressionable, morbidly sensitive, and physically timid. For these defects he was not responsible: they were a part of his inheritance, which was the most wretched conceivable. Miserable though it was, it could not entirely spoil his career: his mind was too great for that. But it did react on his character, and in many ways modified and informed his acts. It made him volatile and variable. With all their brilliant incisiveness, his letters often evince his vacillating moods. He had more brilliance than discretion, more assumption than tact. Although his intentions were in the main good, his procedures were often faulty. He was supremely egoistic, as is always the case where the sensitive mind is in hot revolt against personal injustice; and such was his unhappy lot for all his length of days. He was almost entirely a self-educated man; and such men are likely to manifest peculiar traits. So, bearing these three facts in mind: that he was sickly, that he was an often thwarted genius, and that he was for the greater part self-taught, one can easily predict that he would bear most forms of mental stress but poorly. Hence, though his egoism never advanced to the stage of self-sacrifice, it prevented him from being submissive to the will of any majority, and thus brought upon him tribulations which he bore with frequent loss of dignity. Inconsistency of word and act troubled him not at all, for in that respect his mind was color-blind. Like Petrarch he was a severe critic of the Roman Curia, yet like him too he was all his life a courtier for favors from highly placed churchmen. Some of his ideas were held dangerous in that he advocated a liberty in some matters that might readily degenerate into license. He did not always distinguish clearly enough between discipline and dogma. His looseness of language was liable to become mischievous in that it played so easily into the hands of bigots. And when he was brought to book for his lapses in that regard, he bore criticism petulantly and peevishly. He could never learn the art of being eloquently silent. It was not in

his power so to control himself, owing to his neurasthenic tendencies. No one can successfully impugn his sincerity in advocating reform of the clergy, but equally no one can successfully deny that he was often injudicious in the methods he used. Erasmus was a creature of contradictions. He attacked the clergy for seeking fat "livings," yet all his life he looked longingly for the same perquisites. Although he ridiculed the Religious Orders, always unmercifully and often unjustly, and did his best to destroy them, yet at the same time a large part of his friends, with whom it was his delight to correspond, belonged to these very Orders. He wrote the finest textbooks for the youth of his day, and spoiled some of them for that purpose by an execrable contravening of the decencies. Although he arrogated to himself the right to criticize the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy, he could not support the least disapproval of himself. He would give consolation to the friends of the struggling Luther, which buoyed up wonderfully for the moment the courage of that battling monk; then, before the ink was dry on his pen, he would indite a letter to the reigning Pontiff telling him how he abhorred the Lutheran faction; and finally, when he issued the next edition of his correspondence, he would send forth both letters to a mystified world. Hence not without reason the Lutherans accused him of duplicity; the Catholics, of rashness. With mental equipoise lacking, the processes of his mind were naturally precipitate; which defect is most unfortunate in anyone who wishes to do work demanding perfect accuracy. He was therefore poorly fitted temperamentally for the task which he most loved: textual criticism and commentary. Few of us, indeed, choose the work for which we are best fitted, and the realization of this fact in after life is often our tragedy. Both Wettstein and Simon, the one a Protestant, the other a Catholic, exegete, are indignant with Erasmus for spoiling his valuable Scriptural studies by undue haste; but, not recognizing his temperamental limitation, they bring it against him as a sin of commission. It was something far different. His mind was a seething cauldron from which his thought issued at white heat. If he succeeded in giving them their proper impress with the first blow, all was well; but if not, the fervor of his thought was too glowing for him to pause. He abhorred revisions and the correcting of proofs. Hoping that he might be accurate and that his wonderful memory might always serve him, he felt that his slips should be passed over unnoticed. Even in publishing his voluminous correspondence, where he was surrounded with every facility for verification, he would rather trust to his memory than go to the trouble of looking up any matter. Whence his many lapses, and his consequent irritation when he was criticized for them. This loose writing was indicative of loose thinking; and as a result, between those who fanatically extol him and those who rancorously abase him, he remains contradictory and misunderstood. Perhaps the most striking example of his loose and personalized thinking was his mental attitude towards the monks. He judged them from a purely humanistic point of view, when unbiased reflection on the matter ought to have made him realize that the aim of the monastic institution was primarily not an intellectual but

a religious one. That some of them lacked even on the religious side is true, but we must not forget that the majority of them lived according to the strict tenor of their rule; and many of them became real leaders of humanism.

So that it was more than anything else a certain mental strabismus that so often clouded the judgment of this great writer. It is the inconsistency and even confusion in Erasmus' own mind that has rendered so difficult the task of his biographers; nor is it greatly to be wondered at if there are those who see him, either intentionally or unintentionally, in one only of his innumerable aspects. His critics are a divided camp, some strongly favorable, others flatly against him, and still others in a state of confused indecision. Luther styled him an enemy of all religion; La Bizardière hailed him as a Father of the Church; and Amiel acclaimed him as the Freethinker of the sixteenth century. What an astonishing diversity of judgments! They can scarcely be reconciled, but fortunately they can be understood. Not one of them is right, nor yet wholly wrong. Erasmus was the product of the times in which he lived; and religious bitterness was so rife that four centuries have not sufficed to assuage it. Every man was a partisan, seeking only that which made for his own faction; and among these Erasmus was a genius who wielded a very loose pen. Hence the Catholic, the Lutheran, and even the Freethinker, equally consulted his works for weapons to be used in the tremendous conflict. He occupied a position the most anomalous in history, for had he been just a little more Catholic, he would have been the equal of the greatest lights of the Church; had he been a little more rebellious against constituted authority, he would have deprived Luther of his thunder; and had he been a little more lax in his opinions, he would have anticipated Voltaire. It was his fate but not his aim to shake the religious convictions of many men because he lived and wrote amid his own uncertainty; and it was not until approximately six years before his death that he yielded an unqualified assent to all the Church teaches. He had the ardor of all reformers, and their faults as well.

But despite all his faults he may easily lay claim to greatness. And after we have pointed out his defects, it will be especially gratifying to dwell upon his estimable qualities. The most striking thing about him was the tremendous energy which ever spurred and wholly dominated him. As a result, the vastness of his literary output has rarely been equalled in all the world's history. He, more than any other single writer, popularized the learning of his times; and to him must be given the credit for having made the largest contribution toward placing literature on the same plane held at the time by painting, sculpture, philosophy, and the other sciences and fine arts. In his special field as a writer of books for the young his influence in arousing a desire for classical erudition among these susceptive minds was most potent. By the glamor of his erudition and the attractiveness of his style, he stimulated in his own and subsequent generations a love of learning which has left permanent effects in its train. He enriched his writings from the store of Greek and Latin history, poetry, mythology,

and philosophy, of which his mind was a vast treasury; and great credit must be given to him for his share in refining and elevating the taste of the multitudes who eagerly devoured his works. There is also another thing which I will here set down to his eternal credit, that while he undoubtedly set an example of irreverent speech and immodest jesting, which was avidly followed by Rabelais and Voltaire, he recovered entire religious equilibrium before his death, and tried, in some measure, to undo the harm for which he felt himself responsible. His faith, waver though it surely did at times, finally saved and stopped him from the ribald extremes to which those two French writers were later led. In many ways he seems to be a man who lived before his times, and uttered thoughts that his fellows did not always understand. Nowhere is this more evident than in his lifelong opposition to war. So ingrained was this in his very nature that he would not even edit any author whose subject had to deal with wars and battles. So, among the many classic texts edited by him, we look in vain for Cæsar's *De Bello Gallico* or Lucan's *Pharsalia.* When he set himself to the task of restoring the corrupted text of Quintus Curtis, it is very evident that he was actuated, not by any special affection for Alexander the Great, but rather by the wonderful opportunity offered him for textual emendations.

In presenting this study of the life and activities of Erasmus to the public, I realize that it differs in many respects from the conventional biography of him to which we have become accustomed. This has been less a matter of intent than a direct consequence of the plan which I have followed throughout the work: of having him speak for himself always, rather than attempting to interpret his at times so kaleidoscopic mind. This has necessitated an almost constant reproduction of his letters, or lengthy quotations therefrom, entailing a toilsome burden of translation. But if by so doing I shall have rendered Erasmus more comprehensible to my readers, I shall consider it to have been labor well bestowed. I have endeavored to impart color and interest to the narrative by the addition of historical sidelights wherever they seemed to be indicated; and I venture to hope that the medical aspect of his life, to which I have given much study, and to which I have from time to time drawn the reader's attention in explanation of many of Erasmus' otherwise inexplicable actions, may be enlightening and profitable.

And so, feeling as I do that Erasmus has always been better known than understood, I send out my contribution to the sum total of what is known of him, in the not unreasonable hope that others may be induced by my example to attempt the task of striving to shed still more light on what will always remain a baffling but interesting character.

In the preparation of this long and arduous work, my researches have been aided by many to whom I here desire to make my sincere acknowledgments. To His Eminence Cardinal Ehrle, former Librarian of the Vatican Library, I tender my heartfelt gratitude for his kindness in facilitating my investigations while in Rome. His own many writings on kindred subjects have made him one of the highest of

living authorities on any matter that he has treated; and it was consequently gratifying to me when His Eminence was able to assure me, by an examination of the rolls in the Vatican Library, that the mysterious scribe Lambert Grunnius, to whom Erasmus addressed his famous letter, was as mythical a personage as he was long suspected to have been, and that no such name appears in the Vatican archives.

To Dr. P. S. Allen of Oxford my obligations are many, on account of his splendid edition of the letters of Erasmus, but especially for his accompanying biographical and bibliographical notes, which shed so much light on the correspondents and contemporaries of Erasmus. In this study I have followed his numeration of the letters as far as his work has proceeded, since, unfortunately for me, it is not yet complete. I am indebted to him also for kindly guidance on a recent visit to the Bodleian, when he facilitated my reference studies, and especially showed me several first editions and association copies of Erasmus' work.

To Professor J. Huizinga of the University of Leyden I also desire to express my thanks for his kindness in sending to me an account of the rather involved relations existing between Brabant and the provinces of the Netherlands in the days of Erasmus. The little book on Desiderius Erasmus by Professor Ephraim Emerton has been of service to me also, since it was a wide departure from the slavish path followed by so many former biographers. To Professor E. K. Rand of Harvard University I wish to offer my cordial thanks for his kindness in resolving some of the difficulties appearing in Erasmus' occasionally obscure Latin.

Also to Mr. Frank H. Chase, Assistant Librarian of the Boston Public Library, my sincere thanks are due, not only for his constant suggestions as to possible Erasmian material, but also for his willingness to search outside the library and to obtain for me such material from other libraries wherever procurable. Similarly I offer my thanks to Mr. Walter B. Briggs, Assistant Librarian of the Widener Library of Harvard, for special privileges there accorded to me. In the absence of Dr. Bernouilli, Librarian of the Basle University Library, his two able assistants, Dr. Philipp Schmidt and Dr. Gustav Ryhiner, extended to me the courtesies of that institution, so rich in the letters and documents of Erasmus; and for such kindness I here express my gratitude.

My thanks are due also to the Reverend John A. Sheridan of Lynn, Massachusetts, for researches in the Vulgate, and to Mr. Mariano Joaquin Lorente for material on Erasmus contained in Spanish literature. And lastly to my son, Mr. John Sherry Mangan, who has so long and faithfully assisted me in the arduous task of preparing the work for the press, and who in addition has aided me by his original researches and confirmed my judgment by his own, I tender my profound gratitude.

Lynn, Massachusetts,
September, 1926.

REFERENCES AND SIGLA

The references to Erasmus' letters are as far as possible to the splendid and now standard edition of Dr. P. S. Allen of Oxford, admirably printed by the Clarendon Press. But this work being, unfortunately, as yet incomplete, further references are to diverse volumes, and may be noted by the following sigla:

EE: *Briefe an Desiderius Erasmus von Rotterdam,* hg. von J. Förstemann und O. Günther. Leipzig, 1904.

H: *Opus epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi, per autorem . . . recognitum.* Basle (Froben), 1529.

LB: *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami opera omnia, ed. Clericus.* Leyden, 1703-6. (Unless otherwise specifically noted, Volume III is referred to.)

References to Dr. Allen's work are not preceded by sigla.

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LIFE, CHARACTER, AND INFLUENCE OF DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

LIFE, CHARACTER, AND INFLUENCE OF DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

VOLUME ONE

CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

For the common man the world has no more than a passing glance; he spends his life within his own particular circle and one day disappears therefrom, while the world notes not the year of his coming nor that of his going. But if a man shall arise who shall arrest the world's attention, and who shall win more for his tombstone than the hopeful *natus est* and the ultimate *hic iacet,* then is that man great, and the world remembers him and does him honor.

Desiderius Erasmus was born at Rotterdam on October 27th, year uncertain, but most probably 1466. He himself indicates many different years, but it is possible that he was purposely indefinite for reasons which will appear later.[1]

There is a certain amount of mystery surrounding the relations existing between his parents at the time of his birth. There is a story, common to all his biographers, based on some details which Erasmus gave to Conrad Goclen, his confidential friend, in a document which has been called the *Compendium,* to the effect that his father Gerard or Gerrit, who was a native of Gouda, a town in Holland about twelve miles from Rotterdam, had betrayed a maiden named Margaret, the daughter of a physician of Zevenberge, another small village nearby, and that his parents would not allow him to marry her because they intended him for the Church. The story goes on to tell that she went in due time to Rotterdam, where Erasmus was born, while Gerard, despairing of ever being able to right the wrong he had done her, went away to Rome where he made his living as a copyist. One day he received a letter from his relatives informing him that Margaret was dead, on receipt of which news Gerard's heart was broken and he became a priest. After a while

[1] It is of absolutely no importance whether he was born on the 27th or the 28th of October, but I think his statement in the *Compendium vitæ,* written by himself when there was no longer any necessity for being hazy, may well be accepted; and in that document he expressly states that he was born on the vigil of Sts. Simon and Jude, which falls on October 27th. As to the year, I shall go into that matter when treating of the Grunnius letter.

he returned home and found that he had been imposed upon, and that Margaret was still living. Too late he knew the mistake he had made in becoming a priest, for his vows were then irrevocable.

This rather dubious story, which, if true, would indicate a very poor spirit in Gerard or any other man, shows its inherent falsity by running up against a hard and unyielding fact, namely, that Erasmus had a brother named Peter, older than himself by three years; and Erasmus' testimony on this point is not to be gainsaid. Some of his biographers, assuming that the letter to Lambert Grunnius hereafter to be given, in which Erasmus speaks of his brother under the name of Antonius, is not to be taken for gospel truth, but only in an imaginary sense, feel that they have solved the difficulty. Unfortunately for their hypothesis, Erasmus tells us in another place that he had a brother, and mentions him explicitly. In a letter to John Emsted informing him of the death of Froben, the printer of Basle, he exclaims, "The death of my own brother did not overwhelm me; the loss of Froben is more than I can bear." [2] Lastly and most important of all, we have a letter from Erasmus to this brother Peter, which we will give later with its proper context.

It is borne in upon us that all this romantic story shrouding the birth of Erasmus was invented by him because there was something to conceal, and the facts as we now have them bear us out in that conjecture. His birth to him was a thing of shame which poisoned his whole life. He had a proud and aristocratic spirit, and the sordidness of his father's lack of dignity in consorting with a servant was utter humiliation. He never mentioned either of them with affection, and never named them in his writings more than once during his whole life. Their illicit connection was of several years' duration, and must have been generally known to the townspeople. In the *Compendium* he told some of the facts, but colored them highly. Much as we regret to give credence to J. C. Scaliger's testimony, knowing as we do the bitter feelings that he entertained towards Erasmus and the venomous language in which he couched his allegation, yet only by accepting his version of the affair can this matter ever be explained on any reasonable basis.

Freed from its scurrility, Scaliger's information, which he claimed to have received from prominent fellow-townsmen of Erasmus, is that Erasmus was born illegitimate; that his father was a priest who, after having been frequently admonished by his bishop for his disorderly life, was finally suspended, and thereupon left his native land.[3]

This explains everything. No longer need we wonder at the reticence of Erasmus when we remember his numerous enemies, literary and theological, who would have been only too happy to curb that proud

[2] Eras. Ep. 963. All the references to Erasmus' letters, except where otherwise noted, are to the splendid edition of P. S. Allen, M.A., Ph.D., LL.D., of Oxford, *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi*, admirably printed by the Clarendon Press.

[3] "Nunc populares tui, aliquot etiam vicini, viri boni, nobiles, te aiunt ex incesto natus concubitu, sordibus parentibus, altero sacrificulo, altera prostituta, qui pater tuus semel atque iterum a pontifice castigatus, cum ex illius præceptionibus ad vetera sclera noua propensione fieret irritatior, exilio mulctatus vertit solum." (*See* J. C. Scaliger, Ep. 15.)

spirit with this choice bit of scandal. So Gerard's trip to Rome would then have been taken in order to have his ecclesiastical censures removed; his failure to marry Margaret would be naturally due to his inability to marry her or any woman since he was in priest's orders; his return to his own country after having been restored to his privileges by the Roman Curia, and his fidelity to his vows ever afterwards—all these results would naturally follow his reconciliation with the Church authorities. Then, too, the terms used by Leo X in freeing Erasmus from the disabilities which might in the future prevent him from holding benefices in the Church point strongly in the same direction. The words that the Pope used are these: "Ex illicito et, ut timet, incesto damnatoque coitu genitus." [4] Here Erasmus had given his confidence to the Pope, who was a personal friend, and to whom presumably he had told the whole story, or as much of it as he deemed absolutely necessary; and the Pope said that Erasmus feared, not only that he was illegitimate, as would follow from the word *illicito,* but also that he was born *incesto damnatoque coitu,* where the word *incesto* has its classical meaning of a violation of religious law, which would here have been committed by his father if a priest, deacon, or subdeacon.[5]

The Church for many centuries had strongly reprobated the marriage of the clergy, and had vigorously sought out and punished the offenders; yet in spite of her utmost endeavors the practice would no sooner be eradicated in one locality than it would break out in another. It followed as a consequence that many of the clergy and women of otherwise good character incurred this condemnation of the Church. There being no marriage ceremony possible, the children of such secret unions were unavoidably subject to the stigma of illegitimacy. Such offspring were, however, supported and educated by both parents, and brought up as tenderly as the children around them; but since it was well known that this practice on the part of the clergy was prohibited by the Church, much scandal ensued as the result of infringing her discipline.

Now Scaliger was not the only one to assert that Erasmus was the son of a priest. Pontus Heuterus mentions the fact in his list of the great illegitimates of the world, and Eppendorff is referring to it when, in his pamphlet against Erasmus, he says: "What does it matter to me from what hand, or from what priest or monk, or from what dunghill a man shall have sprung, provided that by his gifts of genius he shall overcome and make amends for what was not his fault." [6]

Father Teofilo Reinaudo makes a statement of similar import in his catalogue of the illustrious writers of Germany.

So it would seem, on a survey of the evidence, both that given by Erasmus himself and the exact statements left us by others, that the following is a reasonable presentation of the case. Gerard, the father

[4] Eras. Ep. 517.

[5] "Et deinde licet defectum natalium patiatur, ex illicito et, vt timet, incesto damnatoque coitu genitus, ad omnes etiam sacros et presbyteratus ordines promotus de licentia sui superioris existens," etc. (*See* Eras. Ep. 517.)

[6] *See* Hen. ab Eppendorff, *Iusta querela ad D. Erasmi libellum,* etc. Hagenau 1530.

of Erasmus, fell in love with his housekeeper Margaret, but, being in Holy Orders, could not marry her. They had two children, Peter and Erasmus, whom the father assisted the mother to rear and educate. Scandal having arisen over the matter, the young ecclesiastic was summoned to Rome to do penance and be relieved of his ecclesiastical censures, which could only be accomplished after he had solemnly promised to give up the connection, and to avoid giving scandal in the future. This simple statement of the case, which does not essentially vitiate the testimony either of Erasmus or of those who have written about the circumstances of his birth, seems to us the most natural explanation of something which has always proved a stumbling-block to the biographers of the great humanist.

But that such a condition of affairs as is here disclosed in the relations existing between his parents was not uncommon in his day, is very evident from the most casual perusal of the proceedings of the various Church councils which were held from time to time to correct this and other faults of the clergy. Instructions were given to the bishops to proceed against such clerics at the Councils of Constance, 1414; Salzburg, 1420; Cologne, 1423; Tortosa, 1429; Freising, 1440; Mainz, 1441; Tours, 1448; Lyons, 1449; and Cologne (Second Council), 1452. We may also add the Council of Basle, where a decree was made, on January 23, 1435, against the incontinence of some of the clergy: that is to say, against those living in public concubinage, "Who shall be deprived for three months of the fruit of their benefices, and that if they refuse to obey, they shall be declared incapable of enjoying any benefice; that if they fall again after being restored, and give no signs of amendment, they shall be declared incapable of holding ecclesiastical dignities forevermore."

Before leaving this phase of our subject, we realize that, after so many centuries, the matter might have been allowed to remain in the oblivion where it has so long rested. This might well be so except for one vastly important reason. Erasmus was the innocent victim of circumstances for which he was not responsible. All his days he had to bear the stigma of what was no fault of his own. He constantly writhed under the consciousness of it; it continually obtruded its repellent face under the most embarrassing circumstances and at the most inopportune moments of his career; it had to be overlooked or its concealment connived at several times when it was a question of observing the rules of strict ecclesiastical discipline; and, when he had become famous in the Church and was the Councilor of the Emperor, he at last supplicated the Pope to relieve him once and for all of the disabilities which the canon law of the Church had for so many years held over him. This, we think, is the secret of his terrible animosity against those priests and monks who, by their disordered lives, were the cause of shame and misery to others; to which we may add the fear that he might one day be compelled to return to the monastery which he had left, he hoped, forever.

Before going further, it might be well, in view of the slurs which were cast on Margaret, to fix her status in life. As far as we know,

she was a woman of good character and a tender mother. Scaliger, who never knew her, assailed her character with a vile epithet, as did also Eppendorff, in venting their spleen against Erasmus; but we may safely assume that her character had nothing in it of common looseness. After Gerard's return from Rome there was no resumption of their former relationship, but she devoted herself like any good mother to her maternal duties, so that Erasmus was able to say at the only time when he ever mentioned her that she was "of honorable manners and of edifying life." And judging Gerard and Margaret by what we know of their individual characteristics, we may attribute their failure to resume their former relations as much to Margaret as to Gerard. For we must conclude, from her tender care and solicitude in bringing up her children, that she was a true mother, sincere, and probably devout. In any case, she lived an unsullied life from that time to the day of her death thirteen years afterwards. Gerard too, in spite of the levity of his disposition, which had caused him to be nicknamed "the facetious," was a good father to his boys and maintained them and their mother honorably, assisting the latter both by money and advice in the education of their children.

CHAPTER II

EARLY SCHOOL DAYS: THE LETTER TO GRUNNIUS

At the desire of Gerard, the mother sent Erasmus to a school in Gouda kept by one Peter Winkel. Between Winkel and his pupil there was no sort of mutual attraction, so that the lad did poorly under his tuition; in consequence of which the parents shortly sent him to Utrecht, where by the father's influence he was received as a chorister. Here he stayed until he was nine years old, getting the sort of instruction which was customary in the cathedral schools at that time. After he had completed his ninth year (and here we still see the guiding hand of the father), he was sent under the care of his mother to the monastic school at Deventer. This was a celebrated school presided over by famous men, and of which we must speak at some length, since it was here that he received the first real mental training that was afterwards so powerfully to influence his whole life. This school was kept by the *Fratres Collationarii* or Brothers of the Common Life, an order of then comparatively recent origin, founded by the celebrated Gerard Groot; and it will suffice us to state now succinctly, as a sufficient guarantee of the high character of the scholarship and the religious influences of the school, that it was here that the immortal Thomas à Kempis spent his tenderest years, from sixteen to twenty-one, and here that he laid the foundation of his admirable learning and piety. Groot, the founder, was filled with the true apostolic spirit; and, gathering around him a band of young men, he pledged them to aid each other in leading a Christian life, to perfect themselves in the knowledge of the Scriptures, to copy and spread to others the truths of the Bible, and to help all with whom they came in contact to advance along the road to perfection. Their first community was formed at Deventer. The members were free from many of the rules that existed in other communities, although they followed of their own free will the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Property was held in common for the use of all, and their motto was "Love one another." Although they worked as copyists, their most important task was the teaching of the young; and it may be truly said that this Order had vindicated its right to live, by reason of the crowds of ardent youths whom it had sheltered, educated, and trained for the service and enlightenment of their fellows in the world.

Erasmus, in his letter to Grunnius, speaks rather slightingly of these *Fratres Collationarii,* as being poorly equipped to teach youth. The truth probably is that the mind of Erasmus was precocious, and he was impatient at the methodical and somewhat labored progress of his teachers. He states as much in that letter, as we shall presently see.

However, we can most of us look back to similar conditions in our own schooldays, when, in our overweening conceit, we felt at times that we could easily teach our teachers. Erasmus is not quite fair to these old instructors of his. In his letter to John Botzheim he says that, when he was a boy of twelve, he saw Rudolph Agricola at the school in Deventer.[1] Now what was the great man doing in that school where the teachers were so ignorant that one of the pupils knew more than they about the studies they were teaching? And what was Alexander Hegius doing there at the head of such an institution, he who had been a pupil of the great Greek scholar Agricola? And Sintheim, who was the sub-rector and a famous scholar too—why was he wasting his time in this solitude, where the brothers spent their days in saying Mass and reading their breviaries?[2]

We are forced to quote Erasmus against himself on this point. He says that he was under the care of these *Brothers* for about six and a half years, during which period he went through the whole course of logic, physics, metaphysics, and morals, besides being so well versed in Horace and Terence that he could recite them by heart. He had also made a beginning in Greek, which in those days was an almost unknown study.[3] Evidently Erasmus felt that in this petition to the Pope, from which we are quoting, he must "draw a long bow" at all hazards, since he deemed it thus necessary to disparage his ancient teachers.[4]

It may be well at this point to give a translation of this famous petition, which is constantly quoted by every biographer, but, with one exception, never given in its entirety, most probably on account of its extreme length. But as it gives many details of that part of his youth which we are now considering and which we can learn from no other source, we must of necessity suffer its prolixity on account of its importance, feeling that a perusal of this unique document will amply repay us for the time spent in the task.

> Erasmus of Rotterdam to Lambert Grunnius, Papal Secretary:
>
> Greeting. Hitherto, most learned Lambert, although besought by many, I have taken pleasure in refraining from the prosecution of this kind of suit; nor have I been a source of trouble to any of my friends. But now a singular sense of duty has made me depart from my ancient custom, and has caused me to take upon myself the task of defending a client, and to trouble you, a most friendly man, about the trouble of a friend. Wherefore I ask you this first service, that you deign to familiarize yourself with the whole chain of events. Indeed, I am confident that, if I ask this, you will both

[1] "Rudolphus Agricola primus omnium aurulam quandam melioris literaturæ nobis inuexit ex Italia, quem mihi puero, ferme duodecim annos nato, Dauentriæ videre contigit." (Eras. Ep. I.)

[2] "Quum bonam diei partem cogantur precum et operarum pensis impendere, non video quo pacto valeant liberaliter instituere pueritiam." (Eras. Ep. 447.)

[3] Eras. Ep. 447.

[4] Their seminaries were numerous, as he says; and Pennington in his *Life of Erasmus* mistakes the meaning of Erasmus completely when he translates the latter's *qui nusquam gentium non nidulantes* by the phrase, *who not having a home anywhere.*

approve of my offices in the matter and bestow your own, not only on account of our friendship, by favor of which I know you would deny me nothing, but also on account of the merits of the case itself. For it is not a question of a trifle, of mere "goat's wool," as the expression is, but concerns the welfare of an individual of most gifted character, who, in the fullness of life, will perish mortally unless we come to his assistance. Would that this whole affair were as well known to you as to me, for I well know that with three words I should have gained my case. Nevertheless, I will paint the whole matter for you so conscientiously that there shall be lacking nothing (or at least as little as possible) which is necessary to your proper understanding of it.

He whose cause I plead has since boyhood been known to me so intimately that I scarcely know myself better; and many of the facts which pertain to this suit I have not merely heard tell of, but have seen with my own eyes. So keen are the humiliating circumstances of the affair that I myself can scarcely relate them without tears; nor do I think that you, who are by nature so kind, will be able to read them with dry eyes. But that, my Grunnius, is true Christian kindness, not only to rejoice with the happy, but to weep with the sorrowful. I know, dear friend, that you are well acquainted with, and especially dislike, the dishonesty of certain Pharisees who, like those mentioned in the Gospel, go about not only by land and sea, but through all the palaces of rulers, through all the homes of the wealthy, through all the schools, and through all the taverns, in order to decoy into their net some proselyte, setting their traps with incredible arts for the innocence of boys and girls; and well they know the years that are most suitable to injustice and deception, that they may lead them into the kind of life whence, once ensnared, they are unable to extricate themselves; than which type of slavery there is none more miserable. For the slave bought at auction can so please his master that he may be freed from his bondage. Therefore I shall not too long detain you by dwelling on things well known, for the world is everywhere full of their schemings. Where is the boy of notable talent, high birth, or wealth, whom they have not insidiously allured, for whom they have not spread their nets, whom they have not entrapped with their deceits?—and this frequently without the knowledge, and sometimes against the will, of the parents. Although this is worse than any kidnapping, yet these pretenders even dare to adorn the deed with an honorable appellation. "You must fly to Christ," they say, "even though you trample your parents underfoot: against the influence of the Divine Spirit the authority of parents avails not." As if, forsooth, Satan could not dwell even among the monks, or as if all who receive the cowl are breathed upon by the spirit of Christ, although by far the greatest number are led thereto by stupidity, ignorance, desperation, or a desire for ease and the hope of being fed. That God commands children to obey their parents is beyond controversy; while what spirit it is that urges a man to become a

monk is not known even to him who is so led. Here you see what a vast field of commonplace opens up to us; but I may not linger there, although everyone's ears are burning with the daily complaints of the entrapped ones. I do not wish to find fault with any Order, nor will I defend those who, having heedlessly thrown themselves into the ditch, finish worse what they have started badly enough, by taking refuge, not in liberty, but in a license to sin. Moreover, in such a dissimilarity of bodies and temperaments, the same conditions do not suit everybody; nor can anything more unfortunate happen to persons of especial talent than that they should be induced by craft or propelled by force into a state of life from which they cannot extricate themselves. For the happiness of men is founded on this: that everyone may apply himself to that for which he is by nature best constituted. Now to compel some to celibacy or to the monastic life will turn out no more happily than if you were to lead an ass to the Olympic games or an ox to a wrestling bout, as the proverb has it.

Let this suffice as preface. Now hear at the same time the misfortune of a fine young man and the detestable criminality of these kidnappers. And here again, I beseech you, lend me your close attention, for I most earnestly desire that you approve with your own judgment what I am doing. For mere complaisance is often displeasing; but what is done with judgment is always gratifying. Two brothers there were, Florentius, and his elder, Antonius. While they were still boys they lost their mother; and their father, dying soon after, left a property, small indeed, but which would have abundantly sufficed for finishing their education, had not the rapacity of their relations, who surrounded the dying man, made that little less. For of the ready money which he had about him at that time not a penny was left. What remained in real estate, however, or was secured to them in writing, and hence not so easily to be seized by the claws of these harpies, would have been sufficient for their education in the liberal arts, had not a great part of it been lost by the carelessness of their guardians. You well know how few people there are who are conscientiously vigilant in other people's affairs. Their guardians, however, had set their minds on having them brought up in a monastery, esteeming it a marvel of parental kindness on their part if they thus provided them with a maintenance. Towards this, already so inclined by their own wish, they were urged by a certain prior, an arrogant man, who enjoyed a considerable reputation for piety, especially in that under him, as schoolmaster, they had learned in childhood the first rudiments of grammar. This latter was generally held to be a man of pious and upright life: that is, he was free from gambling, impurity, extravagance, drunkenness, and other infamous vices; but he was a man wholly selfish and amazingly penurious, nor preëminent in anything in popular opinion, nor even approving literary attainments, save such as he himself had scantily and with great difficulty acquired. For when Florentius, now a boy of fourteen, wrote him a some-

what elegantly couched letter, he replied severely that if he wrote him such a letter again he must add thereto a commentary; for it was his own custom to write plainly and "to the point," for such was the word he used. He seems to have had an idea, such as I have known many men to have, that if he could gain any disciple to the monastic life he was offering to God a most acceptable sacrifice; and he used boastingly to relate how many youths he had been the means of adding each year to the Orders of Francis, Dominic, Benedict, Augustine, or Brigid.

Hence, when they were ready for the schools, which they call universities (for they were now sufficiently versed in grammar, and had learned the greater part of the Dialectics of Peter Hispanus), yet fearing that they might there drink in something of a worldly spirit and refuse the yoke, he saw to it that they were put out of the way into a company of those who are commonly called *Fratres Collationarii,* who, having nested themselves in everywhere, make a regular business of hunting up boys to be trained. Their chief care, should they see any youth of unusually high spirit and quick disposition (of which nature are almost all very fertile minds), is to break his spirit and humble him by blows, threats, scoldings, and other devices, which they call "breaking in"; and thus to fit him for the monastic life. For this reason they are much esteemed by the Dominicans and Franciscans; for these latter admit that their Orders would very soon perish, did not some such seminary as the above feed them. For it is from such cohorts that they select their young soldiers. True, I think they have among them some not ill-disposed men; but since they suffer from a lack of the best authors, and live in their own obscurity, spending their lives in the observance of rites and ceremonies; and since they measure themselves by themselves and not by others, compelled as they are to spend a good part of the day in prayer and their customary tasks, I do not see how it is possible for them thoroughly to instruct youth. Certainly the fact speaks for itself, since nowhere else are young men sent forth worse taught or worse trained. The boys lost more than two years with them: at least it was loss of time for the younger, who was somewhat more learned than his teachers in those very branches which they professed to teach. One of the instructors was such that Florentius declares he never saw a more ignorant or a more vainglorious monster. And such as he are the men who are often set over boys; for they are not chosen by the vote of the learned, but at the pleasure of the head of the Order, who frequently is uneducated. There was one, however, who always seemed to be delighted with the character of Florentius; and when it became a question of his return home, this monk began in private conversations to urge him to join their Order, mentioning many of the advantages by which boys are wont to be attracted. Would that the thing had been done; for either the love of piety would have detained him willingly among them, or, if the affair had so shaped itself, it would have been lawful for him to return to his former

state of freedom. For this body of men, who are motivated by an individual sense of virtue, and a vestige of early religion, are not bound by irrevocable vows. And truly, if the opinion of spiritual men were of more avail than the decrees of the thick-headed, there would henceforth be no irrevocable vow beyond baptismal vows, especially in view of the present malice, or weakness, of mortals. While this monk, therefore, was plying him with frequent exhortations, adding from time to time blandishments, small presents, and finally caresses, the boy, in a manner not at all boyish, answered him that he did not yet understand either this kind of life, or even himself, and that as soon as he was a little older he would seriously consider the matter. Thereupon this man, who was not altogether stupid or bad, gave him up; but I have known some of his fraternity who, not only by harshness or flattery, but also by terrible adjurations, and, I had almost said, exorcisms and incantations, have tried to prevail on rich and noble youths not yet past their fourteenth year to join their Order without the knowledge of their parents. What is kidnapping if this is not?

When, therefore, Antonius and Florentius had returned home, the guardians, who had not used the best of judgment with regard to their inheritance, small as it was, began to treat about their entering a monastery, partly that they might the more quickly be relieved of their care, and partly that the schoolmaster, who alone was administering the estate (for one, seized by the plague, had died quite suddenly, without giving any account of his stewardship, and the third, who was a banker, took very little interest in their care), considered that he would make a most pleasing offering to God, were he to present these two lambs. When Florentius perceived that they were acting as if they already had the necessary willingness of their wards, he conferred with his brother, who was three years older than himself, while he was barely fifteen; and asked him if it was really his desire and intention to be bound by obligations from which he could never after free himself. He confessed candidly enough that he was not led on by a love of religion, but was constrained by the fear of their guardians. "What," said Florentius, "could be more senseless than your action, if from foolish modesty and the fear of men by whom you will certainly not be beaten, you consign yourself to a kind of life of which you know nothing, but out of which you cannot stir a foot when once entered?" Hereupon Antonius began to excuse himself by alleging their small pecuniary resources, little originally, but now much lessened by the negligence of their guardians. "There is no reason for fear," said Florentius; "we will scrape together what remains, and having gathered up a little sum we will seek some university; friends are not lacking; and besides, many are supported by their own industry that have not a penny at all. Moreover, God helps those whose intentions are noble."

This reply so appealed to Antonius that he in turn enlarged on the many possible chances of help that had not occurred to his

younger brother. Therefore it was settled between them that they would postpone to a later period the monastic question; and that after they had spent three or four years in those schools, they would be better able, by their years and their knowledge of the world, to discern what would be most beneficial for them. This decision was equally pleasing to them both; but the elder brother was still troubled as to the reply to be given to the guardians, who, all unaware of the intentions of their wards, were working on the monastic problem seriously and sedulously. So a formal reply was concocted between them, of which Antonius approved indeed, but stipulated that the younger should be the spokesman to make reply for both, since he himself was more timid in speech, and somewhat less skilful. So Florentius accepted the terms, stipulating only that his brother should be firm; "for if," he said, "you should fail me after I had given our answer, the whole tragedy would fall on my head. Change your mind at once if you think that threats or flattery will move you to yield; for believe me, this is no jesting matter." Antonius took a solemn oath and pledged his faith that he would stand by his word.

A few days after came the aforesaid guardian; and having enlarged on his kindness towards his wards, as well as on his remarkable care and attention to their interests, he began to felicitate them on having found for them both a place with those monks who are called *Canons Regular*. Hereupon, the boy Florentius, responding for both as per agreement, returned thanks to him for his kindness and zeal. For the rest, he said, it did not seem wise to his brother and himself, inexperienced as they then were in both years and worldly affairs, to join any Order, not yet knowing their own minds, and being wholly unacquainted with the nature of what they might be undertaking. They had never yet visited a monastery; nor had they been able to learn what kind of being a monk might be; so that it seemed more satisfactory to them to spend a few years in honorable study, after which this question could receive more mature consideration. Thus the matter would turn out very happily.

This far from boyish reply ought to have been received by the guardian with an embrace, had he been a truly kind man, or one filled with evangelical prudence. Yea, rather I should say, that if he had observed that the youths were too ardent, he should have checked them, nor suffered them to yield to a momentary feeling. But instead, he flushed up with anger, as if he had been struck a blow; so that this man, otherwise of a gentle disposition, was now so filled with impotent rage, that only shame restrained his hands. With exceeding scorn he called Florentius an idle rascal, and accused him of having no sense (you recognize the voice of the monks); he resigned his guardianship, and refused to be responsible for them any longer with those tradesmen from whom they bought their provisions. He insisted that there was nothing left and that they must look around and get food where they could.

With these and many other cruel and cutting reproaches he assailed the younger, forcing him (for he was still a boy) to tears; but they did not drive him from his purpose. "We accept," he said, "your resignation as our guardian, and release you from all future care of us." Then they departed.

When the guardian saw that threats and reproaches had availed him nothing, he called in his brother the banker, who was said to be a man of pleasing address and persuasive speech. The meeting took place in a pleasure garden; the boys were told to be seated, and refreshments were offered them. After some friendly anecdotes, the main question was entered upon, but treated from an entirely different standpoint. Very gently they lied about the wonderful happiness of living in the Order aforesaid, pointed out to them the great expectations that might be realized, and then added their entreaties. Why not? Softened by these means, the elder brother began to weaken, evidently forgetful of the oath which he had more than once taken to be firm. None the less did the younger persist in his determination. In a word, the faithless Antonius, after betraying his brother, accepted the yoke, having first stolen all their ready money—no new habit of his. For him the affair turned out well; for he was a man of dull mind, but lusty body; selfish, cunning, and artful; a thief, a drunkard, and a voluptuary; in short, so different from his younger brother, that one might imagine him to be a changeling. He was always his brother's evil genius. Not long afterwards he played the part among his companions that Iscariot played among the Apostles. When, however, he saw his brother miserably entrapped, his conscience stung him, and he deplored bitterly that he had ruined him by drawing him into the snare. You have here the confession of a Judas; would that he had followed his example and hanged himself, before he had committed such an unfraternal deed! Florentius, like all who are apt of study, was unsophisticated and careless about everyday matters, and displayed a wonderful simplicity in these things. You will find many with beardless chins who are mature in cunning; but he had a mind for nothing but his studies. His whole bent was in that direction; and by the force of his nature he was borne thither, having lived in school from his early childhood. Of delicate constitution, yet not unfit for mental activity, he had just entered on his sixteenth year.

Finally, weakened by quartan fever which had already kept him sick for over a year, and which had been brought on by his sordid and penurious mode of living, whither could a youth of this kind betake himself, betrayed on all sides, and entirely destitute, ignorant of the world, and afflicted with illness? Was not enough injustice inflicted on him to drive his boyish mind to any course? Still he persevered in his not rashly formed determination. In the meantime this same stupid guardian, in order to finish what he had begun, suborned for his purpose various persons of divers conditions and sexes, monks, semi-monks, male and female cousins, people young

and old, acquaintances and strangers. Among these there were some so foolish by nature that, had not their sacred robes advantaged them, they might have walked about in public as morris dancers, with earrings and tambours. Others there were whom I consider to have erred rather from a superstitious sense of piety than from malice; but what matters it to a dying man whether he be killed by folly or perverse affection? With how many battering-rams was his courage shaken! One would depict for him a lovely image of monastic tranquillity, singling out its best phases: even an intermittent fever could be so praised by exaggerating the advantages and suppressing the disadvantages. Another very tragically exaggerated the perils of this world—as if monks are outside of the world—describing themselves as sailing in a seaworthy vessel, while all others are tossed about by the waves, certain to perish unless a pole or a rope be thrown out to them. Another placed before his eyes the terrible tortures of hell—as if there were no road to hell from the monasteries. Still another kept affrighting him with fabulous tales; for they are well furnished with such. A certain traveler, wearied with fatigue, sat down on the back of a dragon, thinking it was the trunk of a tree; and the disturbed dragon, turning its head, devoured him. Thus the world devours its votaries. Another man called at a monastery by chance and, although strongly urged to remain, determined to depart; but on the way a lion tore him to pieces. Wonderful apparitions were related, not less absurd than those which old women are wont to retail about ghosts and spectres. Some excited him with a different sort of fables; of a monk with whom Christ used to talk for several hours daily: of Catherine of Siena who as a girl lived on such terms with Christ her spouse or lover that they used to walk up and down the room, reciting their Hours in common. Especially did they exaggerate their communion of good works; as if they themselves did not need them when, as a matter of fact, they need the Lord's mercy more than do the laity; and as if there was not in the whole body of Christ a communion of all who do good deeds. Not to be too tedious, no artifice was left untried against the mind of a simple boy left destitute by the treachery of his brother, and broken in health; nor was he watched with less care, zeal, and vigilance than if an opulent city was to be taken; of such importance did it seem to these worse than Pharisees to bury alive one breathing, living youth. There were among them some who used to sound the praises of their own Orders with such intense partisanship that they fell out with each other, and made a laughingstock of their Christian profession. Since the boy was in advance of his years in talent, learning, and eloquence, each hoped that he might obtain him as a distinguished ornament to his own community. That was their kind of piety, their kind of zeal. Many things I know that I will omit, most learned Grunnius, for fear that I might tire you in the recital; but I know that from what I have said you can guess the rest.

Florentius in the meantime was caught between the door and the

wall, as the proverb has it. While he thus stood uncertain, looking everywhere for some divinity to appear and point out a way of safety, he happened to visit a certain community near the town where he lived, and found there one Cantelius with whom he had been brought up from infancy. This man was older by some years, having a cunning mind, ever bent on self, yet of high spirit. It was not so much piety as good eating and a love of ease that had allured him to a monastic life. He was a glib fellow and exceedingly lazy, had made but little progress in learning, but was somewhat skilled in singing, for which he had been trained in his early years. Having sought in vain to make his fortune in Italy, and his parents continually complaining of their poverty and their large family, he sought the protection of the cowl, which has this to be said in its favor, that it very conveniently lends itself to the sustaining of many children who would otherwise perish. When Cantelius perceived from his conversation what remarkable progress in learning Florentius had made, thinking at once of his own interests, he began with incredible affection (for his nature was mercurial) to exhort him to follow the same kind of life that he himself did, sketching in words a beautiful picture of his own Order, emphasizing its blessed tranquillity, liberty, and concord. But why should I go on? It was a brotherhood of angels. He repeatedly dwelt on the abundance of books that were to be had there, and what opportunity for study; for he well knew the bait by which the mind of the boy might be caught. In short, if you had heard this man, you would have said that the place was not a monastery, but the mead of the Muses. Florentius loved this Cantelius with intense boyish ardor, due to the candor of his nature (especially since he had found him again beyond his expectation after so long a time), as is customary with those of his years, who are likely to conceive violent affections for certain acquaintances. For he had not yet learned to judge men's minds, but from his own feelings estimated others. Cantelius left no stone unturned, trying in every way to subject the boy's mind to his own purposes by his enchanting words; but the boy remained firm. After that conversation Florentius was exposed to a still greater attack from the others; for they had rigged up more powerful battering-rams. They urged to him the desperate condition of his finances, the enmity of all his friends, and finally starvation (than which no kind of death is more cruel) if he did not renounce the world. For such is the term they use, calling by a term of reproach the world—those whom Christ with His own blood has redeemed from the world; and claiming as peculiar to monks that which is common to all Christians. After being for a long time rather annoyed than shaken by them, he returned to Cantelius, merely for another pleasant chat. The latter now used the greatest efforts, in order that he might have Florentius as a private and gratuitous teacher. Florentius on his side was inclined to friendships, and glad to oblige his close friends.

At last, when there was no cessation of these importunities, and

no ray of hope left him, he betook himself to the monastery, which was not the one intended for him by his guardian, but the one where he had accidentally found his old associate. Now this place was so unsanitary and unhealthy that it was scarcely fit for raising cattle, much less for his delicate little body; but such tender years as his had not yet learned to discriminate in matters of food, climate, or locality. Besides, he had not betaken himself thither with the intention of joining the Order, but only that he might for a little while escape the clacking tongues, until time itself might bring forth something better. Meanwhile Cantelius eagerly enjoyed his good fortune, taking advantage of the good nature and simplicity of his companion. For Florentius frequently and secretly by night would read to him a whole comedy of Terence, so that in a few months, as a result of their secret nocturnal sessions, they had finished the principal authors, but with great risk to the boy's delicate constitution. That, however, was nothing to Cantelius, who, having stumbled on this good fortune, rejoiced inwardly; for he loved no one wholeheartedly except himself. And lest Florentius might draw back from what he had begun, there was nothing which was not permitted him: the welcome society of his equals pleased him; he took part in singing, playing, and the capping of verses; he was not compelled to fast; he was not awakened for nocturns; no one warned or reproved him; everyone favored and smiled on him. Thus were several months spent without serious reflection; but, when the day was at hand when he must put off the secular and put on the religious habit, Florentius came to his senses, and began to sing the old song; and sending for his guardian, began to treat about his freedom. Once more were harsh threats used, once more was the desperate state of his finances pointed out to him unless he continued in what was well begun. Nor did Cantelius, who disliked the idea of losing his nightly unpaid instructor, fail to do his part vigorously. I ask you, was not this doing violence to a boy who was by nature simple, inexperienced, and unreflecting? But why do I delay? In spite of his objections, the habit was thrown over his shoulders, though they knew that his determination was still unchanged. After this was done, his boyish heart was again cajoled by flattery and kindness. Thus again nearly a whole year passed away in play and thoughtlessness. But he had by now discovered that this kind of life was good for neither mind nor body; for to his mind nothing was sweet but study. Here, however, study had neither honor nor use. In other respects he was not adverse to piety; but he was not particularly charmed with their hymns and ceremonies, in which almost their whole life consists. In such communities it is generally the brothers who are dull, half-witted, illiterate, and fonder of their stomachs than of their books, who are pushed forward for such purposes. If any remarkable talent appears amongst them, any youth who has a natural taste for learning, he is repressed lest he rise above the rest. And yet these men require a strong hand over them; and it generally happens that the dullest and the most wicked,

if he be sturdy of body, gets on best in the pack. Now, reflect with me what a punishment it is for a man born for learning to pass his life among such people, with no hope of liberation, unless perchance he should be placed at the head of a nunnery—than which there is no worse slavery. For besides his constant care of the female flock, he must waste time daily at long drawn out drinking-bouts, not without danger to his virtue; and it frequently happens that they relegate to his former cell the Superior who is broken down with years and no longer of use, all the more miserable in that he led in his younger days the life of a voluptuary.

The boy's tender body was so little inured to fasting that, if he had deferred eating beyond his usual time, he was frequently in danger from atrocious pains in the stomach and fainting spells, when he was not in the least expecting any such thing. Perchance greasy louts will laugh at this, fellows like sheep who will frisk if you feed them hay. But skilled physicians are well aware that this is peculiar to some constitutions, some refined organizations; hence they prescribe for them foods easily cooked, frequently and sparingly taken; although you may find others who, having once filled their bellies, can go without food longer than the vultures. Physicians tell us, too, that such constitutions are particularly sensitive to cold, winds, and dampness, and are more quickly affected by the weather around them than by the food within them. The boy had another discomfort peculiar to his constitution, which had clung to him from childhood on, and which he could not overcome: he could not sleep until well into the night; and if he were once disturbed he could not go to sleep again for several hours. How often used he to deplore, in conversations with his friends, that he was prevented from enjoying those golden hours, and was compelled to lose the pleasantest part of the day in sleep! How often did he try to overcome his nature in this regard, but in vain! Occasionally he tried the plan of staying up all night supperless, but not without detriment to his health. Fish he so loathed that merely the smell of it would give him a severe headache and fever. What could such a mind and body do in a monastery, especially in a locality like this? Just what a fish, forsooth, might do in a pasture, or an ox in the sea. Since the fathers were aware of all these things, if there had been in them a spark of true charity, ought they not to have come voluntarily to the aid of his boyish ignorance or thoughtlessness, and have thus advised him? "My son, it is foolish for you to strive in vain; you are unsuited to this mode of life, and it to you. Seek another kind of life while there is as yet no harm done. Not here alone does Christ dwell, but everywhere; and piety may be cultivated under any habit, if only the spirit is not lacking. We will see to it that your guardians and friends are satisfied, and that you may return in freedom. Thus you will not be in future a burden to us, nor we an obstacle to your welfare."

That would have been a speech worthy of kindly men; yet none of them gave a word of advice, but on the contrary, they brought up all

their contrivances lest this wretched little tunnyfish escape the net. One said that it was the habit of Satan to use all his arts and wiles by which he might be able to trip up the young soldier of Christ; but if he fought his battle bravely, the rest would be pleasant and easy. This monk affirmed that his own experience had been similar, but that now he seemed to be living in paradise. Another brother instilled a scruple into his mind by showing him the great danger he ran, lest the saintly Augustine, justly irritated by his contumely in rejecting the habit, might send upon him some dire evil; and he related several terrible instances of this very thing—how one had fallen into an incurable malady; another had been struck by lightning; a third had perished from the bite of a snake. They added that the taking of the habit was a tacit profession in the Order; and that before God it was no less criminal, and before men no less infamous, than if, being fully professed, he had fallen away. They urged the youth with every kind of weapon, but the most formidable was the fear of disgrace.

"Now it is too late to retreat," said they. "You have put your hand to the plough; it is wrong to turn back; if you put aside the habit which you assumed before many witnesses, you will always be the common talk of everybody."

Here they emphasized the word *apostate* with tragic mournfulness.

"Where will you turn?" said they. "You will never be able to come into the presence of good men; you will be execrated by the monks, and hated by the common people." Now the youth had a mind which felt dishonor keenly, and feared death less than disgrace. On the other hand, he was urged on by his guardians and friends, some of whom had lessened his property by theft. In a word, they conquered by villainy. The boy, with abhorrence in his soul and reluctance in his words, was compelled to put his head into the halter, just as captives in war stretch forth their hands to the victor to be bound, or as men overcome by protracted torments are wont: they do, not what they wish, but what their conqueror wishes.

Florentius constrained his mind as best he could, but as for his body, no one is able to constrain it to suit himself. In the meantime, he did what imprisoned captives are wont to do: he solaced himself with his studies as far as this was allowed, for it had to be done secretly, though it was allowable to get drunk openly. Accordingly he relieved the tedium of his captivity with literature, until some unlooked for chance—some god from the machine—should show him a hope of deliverance. This occurred soon, for being called into his household by a certain bishop who was very powerful, and establishing himself in that position, he afterwards attended a celebrated university. Had such an event not happened, this fine character would have fallen to corruption, in idleness, voluptuousness, and drink. Not that the Order would have been to blame, but it did not suit his nature; for what is life to some is death to others. However, such is the modesty and reserve of the youth, that you

cannot get a word out of him hostile to his old Order; though sometimes reticence and a sense of propriety speak louder than words. Moreover, nothing can be done about these things, unless by the permission and command of the bishop in ordinary, by the consent of the Superiors, both provincial and general, and finally, with the approval of the whole Order. Although his conscience was free, and he knew that he could not be held by a forced vow, yet for a while he ceased to resist, partly owing to his excessive and natural diffidence which had many times proved a detriment to him, and partly owing to his fear of scandalizing ignorant and superstitious people, which he would do if he laid aside his habit, even though he did it at the behest of his Superior. Sometime afterwards it happened by chance that he visited a distant country for the purpose of study. There, according to the custom of the French, he used to wear a linen scapulary, over his frock, thinking it was proper. But twice his life was in imminent danger through it, because in that place the physicians who cared for people who were stricken by the plague wear a white linen cloth over the left shoulder, hanging down in front and back, by means of which they can be easily recognized and avoided by the passers-by in either direction. And if they do not keep to the less frequented streets, they are greeted with stones by the gathering mobs; for so much do these people fear death that they go out of their minds at the smell of the incense which is burned at funerals. At one such time when Florentius was visiting a certain learned friend, he met en route two panderers, or at least brawlers, who with murderous threats and drawn swords were about to kill him, had not a matron luckily passing by warned them that he was in the service of the Church, and not a plague attendant. Nor did they desist from their grumbling or put up their swords until he, having knocked at the door (for the house was close by), was admitted. Another day he was on his way to visit some monks from his native country when suddenly there gathered a crowd, armed with stones and sticks, noisily inciting one another to "kill the dog, kill the dog." Meanwhile there came along a priest, who, merely smiling at his plight, said in a low voice in Latin, "They are asses, simply asses." In the midst of the uproar, an elegantly dressed young man, wearing a purple cloak, issued from a neighboring mansion; and to him as to an altar Florentius betook himself. For he was utterly ignorant of the language, and he could not imagine what they purposed towards him. "Get this into your head," said the young man: "if you do not lay aside that white scapulary, some day you will get stoned in earnest. I am warning you, so look out." Still, he did not take off his habit, but covered it with an outer garment. Good God, what tragedies from a thing of nothing! They hold up their hands in holy horror, these stupid fellows, who place the essence of religion in the habit. I would not say that it should be rashly laid aside; but the Carthusians often change it for the apparel of a tradesman, so that they may more safely come to the synod. Canons Regular, also, for the sake of

study, or for the purpose of a long journey, change or hide their habits without anybody's permission and without any rebuke. For there is not the same obligation to linen vestments that there is to other things. For formerly these Canons were not monks; but now they occupy an equivocal position: they are monks among those who favor them, but are not in face of hatred. But it is a terrible crime, forsooth, if any Dominican or Franciscan lay off his habit; for the Dominican habit protects and prospers the whole household of the wealthy; and if worn by boys for a certain number of years according to their mothers' vow, will save them from disease and awful accidents. The Franciscan frock, thrown over even a dead man, will free him from hell. But, as a matter of fact, the Sovereign Pontiff admonishes certain monks who had settled on divers habits, that they should all use one and the same habit, to avoid giving scandal; but the pontifical decree does not attack those who for honorable reasons lay aside the habit, but only those who do it so that they may do with the worldly what the worldly do. Also, as a matter of fact, the linen scapulary is not properly monastic, but episcopal, and was probably once a part of the dress of the regular clergy. Augustine in his rules does not prescribe any form of habit; rather does he condemn singularity of apparel, admonishing them lest the habit be noticeable, and that they should please rather by their moral lives than by their garments. Now it is evident enough that this rule was made for women, not for men; but I am now concerned with those who think it was written for men. Finally, this is the especial dress for the Pope when he is wont to be clothed in full pontifical state. Florentius knew these things, yet that he might do everything properly, by the advice of his friends, he easily obtained from the Sovereign Pontiff permission to wear any mark of his Order on any part of his person that he wished. When at length he was called to his benefactors, whom he held to be neither unlearned nor of low rank, he put on the French dress, which, with the exception of the pendent linen scapulary, differs in nothing from that of a secular priest (for by this disrespectful name are now styled the lawful ministers of the Church, instituted by Christ and his Apostles). Nor did he do this without the advice of thoughtful men. But when he wore this costume in public, he was admonished by his best friends that such a dress simply would not be tolerated in that country; let him conceal the linen scapulary. You will say that he could have worn the full habit of his native country. But there is no dress so troublesome, where one has to wear a flowing train, with an awkward hood of many folds to be held back. For there this is considered magnificent, and after the style of cardinals. Then business affairs compelled him to change his country, and to become a polyp in dress; for the apparel that is respected in one country is considered monstrous in another. He was a guest, and was in company daily with magnates, who are not pleased with peculiar forms of apparel. So at last it seemed best to his sincerest friends that, as long as his conscience was clear and any scruple of

doubt removed by the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, he should have freedom in the matter, lest by so often changing his habit he might be the cause of scandal to wicked tongues. Let me add that this kind of life into which the youth was thrust is so free that it is very little different from the freedom of the laity. Nor do I here speak of stolen freedom, but of that which is granted by those who are our responsible authorities. I warn you that the Popes are wont to be more easy in relaxing the laws in such cases than when it is a question of leaving the Seraphic, Carthusian, or Brigidian Orders. For these do not accept the authority of the Pontiff, although they regard his authority as sacrosanct when he is bestowing on them immense privileges and prerogatives, and almost esteem it higher than that of Christ. I will not here dispute about monastic vows, the importance of which they exaggerate a great deal, since such a kind of obligation (I almost said slavery) is found in neither the New nor the Old Testament. Moreover, since the Sabbath by Christ's authority was instituted for man, and not man for the Sabbath, much more should institutions of this kind give way, as often as they injure a man's health, especially that of the soul, although here God is speaking of the body; for it was a question of hunger and curing a man on the Sabbath day. And they are really Pharisees who draw out of the pit their ox and their ass on the Sabbath, yet permit every man to perish on account of that same Sabbath. I will not here allege how great a swarm of monasteries exists in which no pious discipline flourishes; so much so that brothels are chaster and more modest; nor how many there are in which, beyond ceremonies and ritual observances, there is nothing of religion. These latter are almost worse than the former because they lack the spirit of Christ; yet on account of these pharisaical ceremonies it is incredible how filled up with pride they are, deeming all piety to consist in external acts and, for the performance of these, daily thrusting boys on to their destruction. They themselves, however, are fearfully bored with these ceremonies; nor would they perform them at all, only they expect them to impress the people wonderfully. Then, too, how few monasteries there are in which the inmates live sincerely according to their rule; and even in these, if you uncover the Silenus,[5] if you regard more closely, if you search to the very bottom, you will find exceedingly few who are truly pious. How cunning are the arts of Satan! How devious is the heart of man! With what skill in dissimulation, and with what craft, are even men of mature experience imposed upon! And yet they require that a boy shall understand these things in a few months? and this they call a *profession*. Suppose we grant that he has found a community where everything is agreeable, what will happen when the physical constitution of him who has made his profession is changed? when in place of a good prior there comes a stupid, drunken, or tyrannical one? or when his fellow-monks who are good are changed for wicked ones? "Let

[5] See Plato, *Symposium*, sect. xxxii.

him change either his monastery or his Order," they will say. It is difficult to be dismissed to a new monastery, and even more difficult to be received into one, since they think there must be something radically wrong somewhere when a brother leaves his former community; and if he should offend anyone even so much as by the lifting of an eyebrow, forthwith he is greeted with "Why do you not go back to where you came from?" Then, too, how troublesome is the argument: which is the strict, and which the relaxed, community? For each wants his own to seem strict. And that is a fine opportunity, forsooth, to change either monastery or Order, when it is simply the cast of the dice whether the poor wretch may not find himself in worse slavery. And moreover, since they allure many by deception, they train these deluded ones not to spiritual piety but to hypocrisy, and force such a personal servitude that many of them repent having joined the Order. And fearing that these novices may publicly speak of the orgies which they witness, they keep them in check with flagellations, penances, the secular power, walls, gratings, and even death. If I am not mistaken, Cardinal Matthew of Sion, at a banquet where many were present, named the place, the people, and the monastery in which the Dominicans had buried a young man alive, because his father, a knight, had demanded with threats the release of his son, who had been secretly taken away by force. So too, in Poland, a certain noble who had drunk too much and fallen asleep in a church saw two Franciscans buried alive after nocturns. Here the pontifical authority has weight with them, in that perchance it conceded this power to them without danger of their incurring irregularity; but when the same authority frees one from his habit, the pontifical decree is torn up, and the one who procured it is thrown into prison. And after this they boast of the founders of their Orders, Benedict, Basil, Jerome, Augustine, Dominic, Francis, Bruno; but let them examine the lives of these men, let them see whether any such proceeding was ever ordained or performed by them, and they will find a far different state of affairs. They worked entirely by good example, by sane doctrine, by friendly admonitions, and by fraternal reproof. He who was not cured by these methods was dismissed from the community, if he did not depart of his own accord, so far were they from seeking to retain anyone who desired to go. I will not speak of the many human regulations, the many forms of habits, the many prayers and ceremonies, in which what is of the least moment, that is, the dress, becomes with them of the greatest importance. He who in his habit indulges in daily intoxication, who caters to his palate and appetites, who associates secretly and openly with lewd women (not to speak too plainly), who wastes the revenues of the Church in luxury, who has recourse to fortune telling and other malign arts, he is an upright monk, and is promoted to an abbotship; but him who from any cause has laid aside his habit they execrate as an apostate, a name which in ancient times was deservedly a term of abomina-

tion given to those who fell away from Christ into Judaism or Paganism. Nay, if you wish to go further, the man given over to the delights of the world, its pomps, its riches, and its other delectations which he abjured at baptism, is an apostate; and not less but more so, whenever disorder is caused by envy of his vice. So, also, monks who live wickedly, as here and there they do, are doubly apostates; first because they have fallen away from that most sacred profession wherein they gave their word to Christ, and secondly because they have departed from that plan of life to which they had pledged themselves. Against such as those, I say, should the accursed name of apostate be hurled, even though they were each wrapped in ten cowls.

Since these things are so, friend Lambert, what a crime it is forcibly, or by deception, to drive any innocent lad into such a net! If these men are openly wicked, as many of them are, what else is this but driving boys to their destruction? If they are neither warm nor cold themselves, into what a miserable servitude do they entangle these lads? If they are commendable for at least the appearance of uprightness, yet since there is such a variety of bodies and minds, and pretense is carried to such an extent, since boyhood is so ingenuous, and the vow irrevocable, as they desire it to be, to what danger of both soul and body do they not expose the young! "But puberty," they say, "gives the power of discriminating between good and evil." All bodies do not mature at the same age, much less minds. It matters not that perchance puberty has rendered them mature for marriage; they may not be mature enough to enter a religious life; for many indeed have entered therein, men of about thirty years of age otherwise well experienced in the ways of the world, who have withdrawn before their profession, saying "I had not thought." Formerly men of thirty were with difficulty given permission to become priests; and do they think that boys of fifteen are suitable for the monastic life? And meanwhile they falsely impose upon the unwary by specious phrases; they speak of the world as if they themselves were unworldly; of obedience, when the Scriptures command obedience to God rather than to men; of irrevocable vows, when they have not yet been able to define the difference between a revocable and an irrevocable vow, if we except the comment of Duns Scotus that a monastic vow cannot be recalled, because it was made to God through the agency of man. For that made directly to God can easily be revoked. And, since the existence of each of these Orders depends on the authority of the Roman Pontiffs, why do they strenuously defy this authority as often as they see fit? Since the Pope frees many from the monastic state, none without good reason, if he has the power to do these things, why do they here set his authority at naught? If they deny that he has this power, do they not hurl at him an atrocious accusation? So, likewise, when the matter is of advantage to themselves, the Vicar of Christ cannot err; but when it seems otherwise, he is doing wrong.

But I do not intend to attack these Orders: providing this or that kind of life is suitable to this or that man, or even necessary, let the vow be irrevocable; but the holier and more exacting the life, then the more circumspectly, the more slowly, and the more seriously ought it to be embraced, and sufficiently early if just previous to forty. Other vows are not binding, unless it is evident there is a sound mind, clear intelligence, and an absence of fear or apprehension. And is this the state of affairs when a lad is pushed, objecting loudly, into the trap by allurements, threats, deceit, or any other means of terrifying him? It is not here a question of the fear that influences a strong man; but it is a question of deceiving and intimidating a simple and unsophisticated boy; and many there are in whom dwells an inborn simplicity, both of age and of personal character. If the signs of virility are present, it makes no difference; the vow holds, and it holds to that extent that the wife at the very altar must be abandoned. Oh, what laws!

In this way Florentius, the victim of so many machinations, was forced into the religious state, ever struggling and loudly protesting against it still; but his conscience was free; and it seems to me that he is no more held by his vow than if he were to give his word to pirates threatening him with death. Nor do I doubt but that, with his usual sense of justice, the Sovereign Pontiff will be as indignant with these kidnappers as he will be favorably inclined towards the case of their victim. You will say that the Pontiff can restore him to liberty as far as the world is concerned, provided that he have a clear conscience in the matter; but even the Pope cannot control the tongues of men. But since Christ, the supreme ruler of the Church, and Paul, his not unworthy disciple, decree that no one shall be judged, especially in such matters as these, which of themselves make neither piety nor impiety, then surely the authority of the Supreme Pontiff ought to have sufficient weight to turn into good opinion the suspicions of men, where to suspect wrongly would be a crime. But what will become of humanity if we perpetually yield to the silly opinions and the scurrilous disparagements of such men? To infirmity or invincible conviction Paul wishes us to be gentle for the time being; but to yield to stupid and malicious opinions, what is that other than to destroy the vigor of Christian piety? Christ so far yielded to Cæsar that he rendered him the drachma, and to the Jews that he abstained from the foods forbidden by the law; but in healing the crippled woman, in giving sight to the blind man, in curing the lame man, in plucking the ears of corn, he openly disregarded them, nay, he even provoked the scandal of the Scribes and Pharisees. And had not St. Paul done the same thing, where now would Christianity be?

What is the charge that these stupid men bring against Florentius? He laid aside his habit. Who knows that he does not wear it underneath? And if he has laid it aside, how do they know the causes that made him do so? How do they know by whose author-

ity this was done? If they know not, why should they judge? And if they knew this was done by the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, why do they not fear to condemn his decision which in other matters they desire to be considered sacred? Where is their wonderful and frequently boasted obedience when they hear not Christ, and asperse the Prince of the Church and the Vicar of Christ? Where is that meekness which they present with bowed head? where is that spirit dead to the world? But putting aside these, where is their humanity, their common sense? When there are so many misdemeanors not here mentioned which can be cast up to them, and in which they are publicly apprehended almost every day (I will not stir up things forbidden and unutterable), yet ceaselessly they bring up the laying aside of the habit as an inexpiable crime. What more inhuman than to upbraid one with his calamity, into which the malice of others hurried him? Who is so cruel as to upbraid a man for being lame when his leg has been broken by a mule? Who casts up his blindness to him who has lost an eye in battle? Who reproaches the epileptic or the leper with what nature inflicted on him? Who taunts with poverty the man who has lost his all in a shipwreck? No, on the contrary, men are so disposed that they pity such, and favor and assist them all they can; and the more awful the misfortune the kinder they are to them.

But what greater misfortune could happen to a youth of fine intelligence than to be thrust into such a sort of life? Therefore, if it is cruelly inhuman for any one to accuse man of an infirmity as of a crime, what must we say of him who accuses another of an offense of which he was himself the cause? Just as if a quack should rail at him as one-eyed whose eye he himself had destroyed; or as if a pirate should upbraid him with being a slave whom he himself had dragged from freedom into slavery. Does not everyone say that it is the height of shamelessness to throw the burden of your own crime on another? What other than this thing do they do who have imposed on the simplicity of this boy by the worst artifices, and afterwards reproach him with a crime which was their own? Do you not therein see the greatest cruelty combined with the greatest stupidity and lack of shame? To them belongs the blame, and yet they desire another to bear the onus. But the ignominy belongs not to him who has fallen into the ditch, but to those who thrust him therein. He laid aside his habit, but you compelled him to put it on. Who ever brought it as a charge against a captured prisoner that he escaped from pirates? Not even the pirates themselves, I think. All others rejoiced with him. Any man is a pirate to him whose liberty he seeks to take away by force. And, if it please you to use less odious comparisons, if a cobbler grows angry with a customer who has rejected a boot, elegant, but not fitting his foot, will he not properly answer, "You are to blame yourself for putting such a boot on me. That it is a handsome boot I do not deny, but it pinches my foot terribly."

There is no reason why an institution may not be very good in itself, but yet to this man or that man be pernicious.

To make an end, my friend, if I have made out a case for my Florentius, in an especial manner I ask you, as quickly as possible and according to the wishes of my heart, to facilitate the obtaining of this request. Do not worry about the expense; I will be responsible. In the space which seems to be vacant at the end of this letter, I have designated a few things which perhaps will be required for making out the decree. They are written in the cypher I sent you with my last letter, but you will not be able to read them unless you hold them near the fire. By this courier I await a response. He will stay at Rome for a fortnight, or not much less. Farewell.[6]

Well, here we have at length this famous letter, concerning which there has been much discussion. On account of the nature of the statements made therein some have regarded it as mere literature, not to be taken as fact. Among others who maintain this position is Nichols, who has given us a partial translation of some of the letters of Erasmus. The great weight of evidence seems to point, however, to the reality of the facts given, and assures that absolute credence can be given to every statement therein contained. The present writer agrees in the main with the writers holding this latter view, but with some reservations which will be here set down. We may not accept everything that he says as absolutely true; for like all special pleaders he is bound to make out his case at any event. We must yield him allowance for the exigencies of his case; we must strip off the rhetorical adornments, and analyze the letter statement by statement, and sentence by sentence. But first to speak of it in general, and to note how it has been regarded by his biographers. Emerton, who published a very able and well-considered *Life of Erasmus* in 1899, after stating that any biographer of Erasmus must be always striving to fix the line where history ends and literature begins, says:

> [Erasmus] felt himself to be the centre of the world. In a sense that is true of every thinking man; but in Erasmus this newly awakened individual consciousness took on a form of acute personal sensitiveness which affected his relation to all persons and all things about him. Especially it reacted upon his writing. He could not be objective on any question into which his personality entered ever so slightly. Whatever touched him as a man, as a scholar, a theologian, a churchman, or a citizen, began at once to lose its true perspective. He saw it only in relation to himself, or at best to the cause of pure learning, which he always felt to be embodied in himself.

He goes on to say:

> The biographers have not tried in any consistent fashion to measure them [these qualities of Erasmus] as affecting the value

[6] Eras. Ep. 447.

> of our sources of knowledge. . . . If we should reject, for example, the letter to Grunnius, or the Colloquy on The Eating of Fish as sources for Erasmus' early life, we should have very little left. If we should accept them as history, we should be mingling fact and fancy in altogether uncertain proportions. The only safe method is, therefore, to try in each case to weigh the value of the text before us with fullest reference to all the circumstances.

Again he calls the incident mentioned in the Grunnius letter, where Erasmus represents himself as having been mobbed on account of his habit, "a cock-and-bull story," and coincides with Drummond in the latter's opinion that the thing is too silly to be believed.[7]

Pennington in his *Life and Character of Erasmus,* published in 1875, says that "the letter certainly shows some self-conceit." And Drummond says, "The whole letter is written in a somewhat extravagant tone, as if the object were to prevail with the Pope by putting him in good humor, and showing him what a clever fellow Erasmus was, rather than by convincing his reason by a temperate statement of facts." [8] Again he says: "One cannot help perceiving that he has made the most of his case. Possibly subsequent experience was permitted to color his narrative. Possibly his resistance was scarcely so determined, or his feelings so strong as he chose afterwards to represent them." [9]

Nichols says, "We may well believe that the good library which the little monastery of Steyn possessed was among the chief inducements which overcame whatever disinclination Erasmus may have had for a conventual life." [10]

Emerton, better than any other of his biographers, it seems to us, has described the salient phases of his character, as far at least as they are evident to us in his comments on men and things throughout his letters; and the present writer thoroughly agrees with him in the statements he makes in the following quotations:

> He was already showing that joy in the idea of being persecuted which later seems to have reacted on his memory of his earliest years. It flattered his vanity to think that men cared enough about him to abuse him, and such abuse gave him an added claim upon the devotion of his friends. His nature demanded affection and admiration, and he was ready to repay them in kind, so long as he thereby incurred no lasting or burdensome obligation.[11]

Speaking of the trip which Erasmus meditated to Italy, Emerton goes on to say:

> Probably nothing would have done so much to chase away the megrims that were always pestering him. He would have had less

[7] Emerton, *Desiderius Erasmus,* pp. xv-xvi and 132. N. Y., 1899.
[8] Drummond, *Erasmus,* Vol. I, p. 16, note.
[9] *Ibid.,* Vol. I, p. 21.
[10] *Epistles of Erasmus,* Vol. II, p. 351, note.
[11] *Desiderius Erasmus,* p. 48.

reason to complain of his digestion and his bad sleeping—but if he could not have complained he would, perhaps, have been unhappier still. . . . Erasmus speaks in the [Grunnius] letter as if his intellectual life had been utterly crushed by the discipline of the monastery, but on the other hand there is every indication that he had all the opportunity for study that he could desire. . . . The monastery had served his purpose, and now he was ready for something wider and freer, but he could not justify his quitting the monastic life without piling charges upon charges against the institution that had tided over for him, as gently as its conditions permitted, these years of helplessness.[12]

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 22-23.

CHAPTER III

EARLY SCHOOL DAYS: ANALYSIS OF THE LETTER TO GRUNNIUS

Now let us proceed to analyze the letter itself. His first accusation is that there were certain monks who went everywhere seeking to decoy candidates into their Order. This may be granted; for it is probable that there was in Erasmus' day a sort of competition among the various Orders in securing the most promising candidates for their ranks; and this in some instances may have given rise to injustice and abuse. But it was not a general custom by any means. It was always accounted an honor to serve God in one of these religious houses; and the number of applicants was generally greater than that of the places to be filled. The selection depended on the undoubted vocation of the applicant as of primary importance, and, secondarily, on his ability to fulfill the duties which might be placed upon him. His wealth, other things being equal, would be no bar to his admission; and under the conditions which have controlled the actions of men in all ages would rather make him a more desirable acquisition. Remarkable talent in a candidate would also be acceptable, or special skill in any line of activity that might benefit the Order and advance the work that it was doing for humanity; the possession of these qualities would make some candidates more desirable than others. And hence monks who were too zealous might have overstepped the bounds of moderation in seeking to strengthen their own Order by the admission of the most promising applicants, even to the extent of coaxing them away from other Orders which were competing with them in the same line of endeavor. It would be impossible to set a limit to the various sorts of allurements that overzealous monks might use for their purposes, or the bad taste they might display in putting their little artifices into effect. All that it would be proper to state here in this regard is that such things were the exception and not the rule. Erasmus himself says that not all monks did this thing, but only certain ones.[1] But he says that "by far the greater number of them become monks on account of stupidity, ignorance, despair, a desire for ease, and the hope of being fed." The thought presents itself at once to us that the Orders certainly were not using ordinary business acumen in seeking recruits of such character, and one is very much inclined to doubt the statement. Indeed, Erasmus himself, in the same breath, shows that their efforts were bent in much more promising directions, for he says, "where is the boy of talent, or position, or wealth, whom they have not insidiously allured?" This certainly would be more in keeping with what we should expect these religious houses to do. We will have to allow for an occasional rhetorical flourish, in which style of writing Erasmus is very

[1] "Scio tibi, vir optime, et probe notam et insigniter inuisam esse quorundam pharisaicorum improbitatem," etc.

prone to indulge, as we shall hereafter have many occasions to observe. For instance, after giving the above severe arraignment to the religious Orders, he begins to hedge, and says that "he does not wish to blame any Order; nor will he seek to protect those who having thoughtlessly precipitated themselves into difficulties, seek a way out only for the greater chance of being able to do wrong." We must also notice the evident inconsistency between two of his paragraphs in this famous letter. The reader may refer back to where he says: "Since the boy was in advance of his years in talent, learning, and eloquence, each hoped [the monks] that he might obtain him as a distinguished ornament to his own community. That was their kind of piety, their kind of zeal."

Almost without taking a long breath, but evidently forgetting what he had just said, he thus proceeds to contradict himself: "If any remarkable talent appears amongst them, any youth who has a natural taste for learning, he is repressed lest he rise above the rest."

Then he proceeds to accuse his brother of stealing his money, even from the person and effects of his dead father. So, too, he heaps obloquy on his guardians, men selected by his father for this purpose, and in whom consequently his father must have had confidence, both as to their ability and their integrity, one being a banker and the other a schoolmaster. He calls them harpies, states that they wasted his patrimony, and that between them and his other friends they had stolen his property. Whatever the truth or falsity of this charge may be, we know that the ingratitude of heirs-at-law towards their guardians is very common, and the task of guardianship a thankless one. For a certainty, it seems to us, they did what was their first duty: they provided for the care and education of the orphans by committing them to the charge of the *Fratres Collationarii.* There were no public schools in those days, all preliminary education being given by the monks, whose schools were the only ones in existence and were of a fairly good character for the times. Higher education was then secured in the universities, of which the monastic schools were the feeders. So far, then, the guardians did what was to be expected of them, and, we may assume, acted in strict conformity with the wishes of the dead father. Where else could they put the boys? Private tutors might have been secured if there were sufficient funds available; lacking these, the monastery school was the only alternative. But let us now follow him from Deventer to Bois-le-Duc, where he claims that the process of making monks was carried on in deadly earnest, under the care of the *Fratres Collationarii.* He says, "their chief care was, if they saw any youth of unusually high spirit and quick disposition, of which nature are almost all fertile minds, to subdue and humble him by blows, threats, scoldings, and other devices, all of which they call 'breaking in,' and thus to fit him for the monastic life." Without stopping here to admit or refute this charge, we may state that no one did any of these things to Erasmus at Bois-le-Duc, for the reason that he was not yet a monk, nor even a novice, as accepted applicants are named.

Now we come to the very serious charge that Erasmus makes against the monks, namely, that they forced boys and girls to take monastic vows of chastity and obedience by methods which were reprehensible. That it was a general practice, as Erasmus describes it, should not be admitted without some qualifying conditions. It has always been the custom of the Church that its candidates for sacred orders should have what is known as a *vocation*. St. Bernard explains concisely what this is when he says, "He who would enter into the Orders of the Church and be received into the ministry of the sanctuary ought to have this intention: to approach God with an absolute disengagement from the things of this world in a perfect purity of mind and body, to be illuminated by Him, and to procure therein his own salvation and that of his neighbor by applying himself to prayer, and to the dispensation of the words of God." [2] St. Paul expresses the idea of a *vocation* in these words: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was." [3]

It is evident that Erasmus never had the slightest shadow of a *vocation* in the above definitions of the term; and it was a terrible mistake for him to have ever entered Holy Orders. But, when all is said and done, he was not compelled to do so. No amount of persuasion, threat, objurgation, or cajolery could have compelled him to become a monk against his will. Then why did he assent finally? Here is the reason. With most men learning is but a means to an end; with Erasmus it was the end itself. He loved to delve into the musty tomes of classical antiquity and there saturate his mind with the wisdom of the ancients. It was recreation and refreshment to his spirit. His ambitions were not yet born, and his aspirations of the future were still dormant. But he was poor, and there was no way to gratify his passion for classic literature except in the monastic life; for, say what one will, up to his day all learning was confined to the monasteries and the universities, which latter in most instances originated in the monastic or cathedral schools. Soon it was to be different, and the young man who was later to take the monastic treasures, hidden for centuries, and make them the common property of the world, was now striving vainly to avoid the only way in which it could be accomplished. He was in the anomalous position of one wanting to eat his loaf and have it at the same time. It was an impossibility. He knew it and yielded. Yielding meant a return to his beloved studies; refusing meant going out into a cold world to earn his living, and leaving his dear studies behind, probably forever. Erasmus, as he himself often said, was no hero, so he accepted the hard, inevitable alternative and became a monk. But, as we have already said, it was a mistake, and a fearful one. The step was irrevocable and embittered his life for years. To such a degree was this so that it finally became unbearable, and more than thirty years afterwards, in the year 1515, when he was over forty-nine years old, he formally petitioned the Pope, in the celebrated Grunnius letter which we have at present under analysis, to release him from his obedience

[2] *In Declamationibus.* [3] Heb. v. 4.

to his former superiors, and to free him from the necessity of wearing their religious garb, which he had long thrown aside.

But to continue our analysis of the Grunnius letter. This is not the place, nor have we the time, to examine the claim of Erasmus that he lost more than two years in Bois-le-Duc on account of knowing more than his teachers in some of the branches taught; but it would certainly be of interest to look over the list of the scholars who were turned out from Deventer, Zwolle, Bois-le-Duc, and the other schools of the *Fratres Collationarii,* which assuredly did not limit themselves to giving to the world Erasmus, Adrian VI, and Thomas à Kempis. And in the very letter before us he regretted that he had not joined this Order. "For," he says, "this body of men who are motivated by a personal sense of virtue and have a vestige of early religion are not bound by irrevocable vows." [4]

However, as the result of an intermittent fever, he returned home, a youth of seventeen years, with a head full of learning, and no settled plan of earning his own living. He had no desire to go to work, his finances did not permit his going to a university, and so the great problem of what to do with him still rested on the shoulders of his guardians. It followed as a most natural consequence, it seems to us, that they should recommend the best thing in those days, as a career for a youth who wanted to be a scholar, namely, that he should seek admission to a monastery, where alone scholarship was to be found. Erasmus suggests that the real reason was that they wanted to get rid of the burden and trouble. Not a very unnatural desire in itself under the circumstances; for probably the guardians were tired of the office of looking out for the support and education of Erasmus and his brother, where the funds for the purpose were getting low, and where there were little thanks to be gained. Erasmus wanted to go to a university, funds or no funds, and he had the dream of the dreamer that it could be done with little or no money; and, as visionaries have often done, he was able to persuade his more practical brother that it was feasible. One of the guardians thereupon lost patience and gave up his office in disgust. But the banker, who was evidently a man of business perspicuity, got the boys together and so successfully showed them their status from a business point of view that he was able to persuade the older brother, but could not move Erasmus in the least. In the letter before us, Erasmus shows how bitterly incensed he was with his brother for yielding to such blandishments, and stigmatizes him as faithless, as a thief, as being strong in body but dull in mind, selfish, cunning, artful, a drunkard, and a debauchee, and that it was a pity that, like Judas Iscariot, he had not gone out and hanged himself. All this is very Erasmian, and brings vividly to mind Luther's not entirely just remark uttered long afterwards: "In the epistles of Erasmus you find nothing of any account, except praise for his friends, scolding and abuse for his enemies, and that is all."

Let us see whether brother Peter really deserved this violent repro-

[4] "Neque enim hoc hominum genus, quod habent præcipuum bonum, ac priscæ religionis vestigium, votis insolubilibus adstringitur."

bation. We know very little about him, but what we do know is entirely to his credit. We find in a letter of P. Merula, prefixed to Vol. III of Le Clerc's edition of Erasmus, that William Herman dedicated a poem *On the Praise of Friendship* to Peter Gerard of Rotterdam. The dedication runs as follows: "To the very accomplished and most learned gentleman Peter Gerard of Rotterdam, brother of Erasmus, *On the Praise of Friendship*." This poem was afterwards printed with the same dedication by Erasmus himself in 1497. Now William was of Gouda, was brought up with Peter and Erasmus, and naturally knew what he was talking about. But we can bring stronger proof of Peter's good character, if more is needed, and from Erasmus himself. We find the following letter of Erasmus, who was in the monastery of Steyn, to his brother Peter, who was a monk in the monastery of Sion near Delft, not far away, which was written in 1487. Now this letter, it seems to us, puts the relative characters of both brothers in the clearest light, and shows that Peter was anything but the man that Erasmus had painted him in the Grunnius letter:

Erasmus of Rotterdam to his brother Peter:

Greeting. Have you quite thrown off the character of a brother? Have you ceased altogether to care for your Erasmus? I write, send, and send again. I expostulate, I enquire of those of your house that come here, and find they have no letter and no message. They only say that you are safe and sound. Nothing is more cheering for me to hear than that, but your part still remains unperformed. You seem to be so resolved that I think it would be an easier thing to draw milk from a grindstone than anything like a letter from you. But what has become, my Peter, of that original kindness of yours towards me, and of that love which was no ordinary love, but worthy of a brother? Have you so soon passed from Mitio to Demeas? Has your mind become so soon estranged towards me? For what other than this can I suspect? If you do not think that you owe to my love the slight trouble of writing a letter (I feel the matter keenly), either I have small place in your heart, or I have entirely slipped out of it. If you desire to free me from this suspicion, if there is any affection for your Erasmus left in you, if there is anything of the brother remaining in you, I beseech you, write to me at once. So gladly shall I shortly behold you in good health, my Peter, and there is nothing that I desire more or hold more dearly than your letters. In no other way shall you be able to assure me that you were mindful of our relationship, and that you entertained the ardent feelings of a brother towards me; and in no other way can you make me feel that those feelings, formerly well known by innumerable demonstrations are made still strong and lasting. But if your affection be estranged, I do not say by any fault of mine, for I know I have committed none, but by any suspicion of fault, I beseech you to accept my apology at once and resume your nature: put off Demeas, and assume again the character of Mitio; and as you never failed me

in the hardest times, stick to me now that Fortune, though not favorable, is less cruel. Moreover, you can be with me in no other way, since living together is denied us, than by writing me frequent letters. If you will only do this, you will confer on me a favor such that nothing else could be more pleasing to me.

If you want to hear what I am doing, I love you greatly as you desire, carry you on my lips and in my heart, think of you, dream of you, have frequent talks with friends about you, and with none more frequently, intimately, or pleasantly, than with our fellow-townsman Servatius, a young man of the most beautiful character and the sweetest nature, and devoted to those studies that have chiefly delighted both you and me from our boyhood. He wishes very much to see you. If you will, as I hope, come to see us before long, you will not only esteem him a youth worthy of your friendship, but will easily like him better than your brother, if indeed I know your culture and his merit. He is a person that one cannot help loving. For this reason I am more disposed to ask you to lend him that small copy of Juvenal's *Satires* that you have. Do not fear, my Peter, you will never confer a favor on a better object. You will find him grateful, and he will not forget it. Farewell, sweetest brother." [5]

Now, in view of what he said of Peter in the Grunnius petition, Erasmus must have certainly been a—well, let us put it mildly and say—a dissembler to write him such a letter as this; and it assuredly resembles very much what is colloquially known as "gammon." So, too, we feel that the main inspiration of the letter was the borrowing of the Juvenal; and we are puzzled to know what this "faithless, thieving, dull, selfish, cunning, artful, drunken, debauched" Peter was doing with a Juvenal anyway. Such a treasure was not in keeping with his character as sketched above by Erasmus. The inference from all this, and much more to come later, is that we must not entirely trust the estimates of his contemporaries as given us by Erasmus, unless confirmed by other and less prejudiced authority.

Again, it would seem that he rather overdrew the picture and spoiled the general effect, when he tells us how this always "stupid guardian" suborned various persons of divers conditions and sexes—monks and semi-monks, male and female cousins, young and old, acquaintances and strangers. Why this general desire to land Erasmus in a monastery against his will? We can understand the interest of the guardians, for he says that they wanted to rid themselves of the burden. But why are the "male and female cousins, the young and old, the acquaintances and strangers" so intensely interested? They had nothing to lose or nothing to gain in the matter. Erasmus had a rather whimsical conception of veracity at times, and was quite equal to telling a genteel fib if occasion demanded it; and his suggestion to his friend Batt not to be too nice with the Lady of Veere in the matter of procuring him money, even to the extent of telling her an occasional little lie, comes to

[5] Eras. Ep. 3.

one's mind involuntarily.[6] We are compelled to feel that all this story of coercion is carried to extremes; and that in painting the picture he used colors that were entirely too lurid, with the ultimate result that our powers of belief are somewhat strained at times. Much as we ought to admire Erasmus' persistency in maintaining his point of view, we must confess that in this instance our sympathies are with the poor unappreciated guardians.

Again, there is the incident of his boyhood friend Cantelius, whom he admits he loved with youthful ardor; and yet the best he can find to say about him is that he had a "cunning mind, bent ever on self, endowed not with piety but a love of good eating, a glib fellow but very lazy," all of which puts a strain on our credulity. For this "very lazy" monk was not too lazy to spend whole nights with Erasmus studying the classics and improving himself to the utmost of his power and opportunity. Strange enough this, if we accept the dictum of Erasmus that most of the monks were indolent and stupid and, if not naturally bad, were made so by their training. Much as the present writer admires Erasmus, he is not at all blind to his defects, not the least of which was this unfortunate tendency to exaggeration in writing and speech. But as our genial Autocrat, who could use his mental scalpel as tenderly as the material blade, was wont to remark, "we must have a weak spot or two in a character before we can love it much"; so the defects of our common humanity which we discern in this truly great man serve only to make us the more gentle with him.

The more one becomes versed in following out the mental processes of Erasmus the more convinced he becomes that there were two Erasmuses—one the literary, and the other purely personal; and the difficulty arises in having always to distinguish between the two. As a *litterateur* he was perhaps the greatest, broadest, and most catholic writer of his age; as a man he was narrow, carping, and selfish. These qualities were ever in conflict, and at times present him to us as illogical, inconsistent, and unreasonable. He was never able to keep from injecting his personality into every question, and from treating it as it affected himself. It was thus that he regarded the whole scheme of monastic life, not as an institution that had produced thousands of great and good men, but as a system that had cramped and hindered the development and expansion of his own individuality. He could not eat fish, therefore the monastic life was to be condemned; he could not fast, therefore the monastic life was radically wrong; he could not devote himself uninterruptedly to literary occupations, therefore the life of a monk was calculated to destroy intellectual evolution; his physical limitations were such that he could not conform to the routine which discipline demanded, therefore the requirements of a monastic career were inconsistent with mental progress. Thus he referred everything to himself, and what was bad for him could not be good for anyone. From his own narrow premises he drew universal conclusions; and in the drawing of his conclusions he employed the vast arsenal of his literary weapons to defend

[6] Nisi forte adeo superstitiosus es vt religio tibi sit in amici negotio mendaciolis aliquot abuti." (Eras. Ep. 94.)

the trivial nature of his objections. Call this a temperamental defect, or a constitutional weakness, or what you will; but any skilful neurologist can recognize therein the earmarks of neurasthenia. And surely never was any boy more exposed to the causes which make for neurasthenia—the pre-natal anxiety of his mother, due to her uncertain relations with his father, the early loss of his parents, mental overwork, lack of exercise from sedentary occupation, unfavorable psychic influences due to the uncertainty of his future—all these were well calculated to undermine his nervous poise and lessen his emotional control. Hence his intense likes and dislikes, his morbid sensitiveness, his selfishness, his constant demands for sympathy, his self-centred attitude, his egotism, his readiness to speak ill of his nearest and dearest for some real or imaginary injury, all these and other defects not here mentioned point to the fact that he was a victim of chronic nerve exhaustion, which has been so often the curse of men of genius. With this fact firmly fixed in our minds, we can forgive many things in Erasmus which at first glance seem repellent; and when he treats us to an emotional outburst, as for example, the virulent traducing of his own brother, mentioned on a previous page, we must set it down to a lack of nervous equipoise for which his forbears were really responsible.

CHAPTER IV

MONASTIC LIFE AT STEYN

But we left him on the point of deciding to enter a monastery. After having been sick for a year of what he called a quartan fever, but which when viewed in connection with his subsequent medical history was most probably a chronic *pyelitis,* made all the worse by his neurasthenic weaknesses, he has finally to make up his mind as to his future career, the monastery or the world, and he elects the monastery of Steyn near Gouda, a house of the Canons Regular of the Rule of St. Augustine. We need not become too indignant at seeing this "boy" immured in a monastery; the facts will not bear this out. This boy, who is represented in the Grunnius letter as about fifteen years old, was in reality twenty-one, well educated, with a keen intellect, and able to marshal facts and arguments to the extent of writing a book. And strange as it may appear, the title of this book was *On the Contempt of the World,* the first literary result of his monastic life at Steyn. In it he tells how dangerous it is to dwell in the world, how riches should be spurned, how bitter and deadly are the pleasures of the flesh, how vain and fleeting are worldly honors, how death comes to all and cannot be long deferred, how wretched and debased is the world, how happy is a life of solitude, how the highest liberty is to be found not in the world but in retirement, how they who live solitary enjoy a double tranquillity, and subjoins the many pleasures that are to be realized in a secluded existence. Then he tells the young man for whom he is writing this treatise not to be too hasty, but to consider the matter well. He says that no one is forced to make a religious profession, but having once made it cannot draw back.

> Formerly [he says] monasteries were nothing other than retreats where good men betook themselves when they were weary of pleasure and vice, or feared the moral contamination when pagans lived with Christians; or else they dreaded the cruel persecutions then raging, and betook themselves to the neighboring mountains, where they lived an angelic life in prayer and meditation. After laboring with their hands and living on the coarsest of food, they spent the rest of their time in reciting the psalms, or in pious reading or conversation, in prayer or works of charity, such as helping the sick and needy, or in other worthy occupations. To be a monk in those days was simply to be a Christian, nor was a monastery anything other than a company of men voluntarily practicing the purest doctrine of Christ. Control over others was conspicuous by its absence, since all were only too eager to advance towards perfection, and there was more need of the bit than the spur. The only reproof was

> a friendly and fraternal advice. Now, alas, many monasteries are tinged with the follies of the world, and are no more beyond worldly influences than the human body is beyond the influence of its internal organs. In these there is such a lack of discipline that they are nothing but schools of impiety, in which no one can be pure or good; and their title to the name of religious serves them only to do with impunity what they desire. And it is to such as these, to whom the world would not trust its sculleries, that the affairs of the Church are entrusted. But there is a considerable difference even among those in which religious discipline is still flourishing. One plan of life suits some, another better suits others. So first it behooves you to examine for yourself and select a plan of life which commends itself to your judgment, remembering the saying of St. Paul, "prove all things; hold fast that which is good."[1]

Now, this admirable treatise, part of which we have given above, was written when he was twenty-two or twenty-three, and a monk at Steyn. Jortin calls it a "boyish exercise, and not containing his real sentiments." Yet it is perfectly in accord with all that he ever said or wrote afterwards, and does credit to his mind and heart. In its style and command of language, its knowledge of the classics, and its understanding of human actions and motives, it shows the most consummate mastery of the art of writing. Moreover, its evident conclusion that the monastic life, for those who had the vocation thereto, was the ideal life, both as affording a refuge from the temptations of the world and as giving opportunities for cultivating the higher and nobler aspirations of man, is a conclusion that cannot be easily gainsaid. That Erasmus realized all this is clear; that he lived up to this ideal, or that he found himself fitted for the life, is nowhere apparent. However, he enjoyed it for the time being, and in the company of William Herman and Servatius Rogerus, two of his fellow monks, he spent the days, and even the nights, over his books, as Beatus Rhenanus informs us.[2] Like most young men in their Vergilian days, he was beginning to try his literary pinions and occasionally dropped into poetry. In conjunction with William Herman he wrote an *Ode to Spring,* and later he issued a treatise on the *Peace of the Soul.* About the same time he wrote and had published a *Funeral Oration on Bertha de Heyer,* a good lady of Gouda who, like Frau Cotta to Luther, had been good to him after the death of his parents. At Steyn too he made his first essay in controversy in a series of letters to Cornelius Lopsen, sometimes called Cornelius Aurotinus, who was a regular priest at Gouda, and against whom he defended the celebrated Laurentius Valla. Valla was born at Rome about 1406, and was one of the earlier scholars of the Renaissance. On account of his assaults on the Scholastic Philosophy, and his defense of Epicurus, he fell under suspicion of heresy, but was freed from canonical censure by Pope Nicholas V, who admired his learning and ability and who afterwards appointed him a papal secretary and

[1] I Thes. v 21. LB Vol. IV, col. 1261D-1262A.

[2] Eras. Ep. IV.

canon in the church of St. John Lateran. Erasmus had become acquainted with some of his writings in the library of the monastery at Steyn, and thought so highly of him that, some years afterwards, he edited and published his *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum*. Valla's influence over him was a lasting, but, perhaps, not entirely a beneficial one, as we shall hereafter have occasion to show. The controversy which Erasmus maintained with Cornelius Lopsen over the merits of Valla is well worth reading, and shows us that even at this early age he could wield a facile pen, with a lightness of touch which did not at all detract from the force of his argument.

There would seem to exist some reciprocal relation between literature and painting, as many painters have excelled in both arts, renowned examples of which fact are furnished in the persons of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. That Erasmus was a painter has lately been emphasized by Maurice Brockwell, who has recently issued a privately printed monograph entitled *Erasmus, Humanist and Painter*. In this well considered study Mr. Brockwell shows conclusively that while at Steyn Erasmus painted some pictures.[3] His remarks on the subject are deserving of quotation:

> His [Erasmus'] preoccupation had been in the main with religion. What, therefore, was more natural than that he should now afford himself mental relaxation by busying himself with painting? We read that in 1484 he painted a picture of "Christ on the Cross, with Mary and St. John." This work is said to have been executed "in the style of the old Dutch Masters" and to have been long in the monastery of Emmaus, called Steyne, near Gouda. It is alleged to have been begun as early as 1484. Dirk Evertsz van Bleijswyck, writing in 1667, was probably the earliest to record such a picture at Delft. Houbraken also informs us of its being in the esteemed cabinet of Prior Cornelius Musius at Delft. Weyerman also tells of it. Martinet and others refer to it as if it were a miniature painted on parchment. Some have urged that it was then "the only remaining one by Erasmus, and more remarkable by its subject than for its artistic qualities." Descamps has recorded that Erasmus retired to this monastery "solely for its library, which was the finest of the century," and that there Erasmus "applied himself at intervals to painting, in which he succeeded and made the same progress as in his other studies." "The merit of his pictures is," he adds, "attested by the artists of the time, but the author does not believe that a single one has escaped from the ruin of that house. One hardly knows to-day where it was built." We are told that it bore the following two-lined inscription, a hexameter and a pentameter, written, and therefore presumably added, by Musius to the painting:

[3] Regarding the authenticity of the triptych, now in possession of Edward A. Faust of St. Louis, Mo., and having on its outer edge the inscription, *ERASMUS P. 1501*, I do not care to enter, feeling too greatly my deficiencies in such matters to venture an opinion. Prof. P. Smith decides against its being a work of Erasmus, but gives no authority.

"Haec Desiderius, ne spernas, Pinxit Erasmus,
Olim in Steinaeo quando latebat Agro." [4]

We would quote more at length from this thoughtful and painstaking monograph did our space permit; but we feel that, from what we have already given, the friends of Erasmus will realize in some little measure what they owe Mr. Brockwell for opening up and showing to the world this new and unexpected phase of Erasmus' genius.

The present writer can add but little to the knowledge which we possess of Erasmus as a painter, but that little may as well be recorded. In a letter to Sasboud, a young friend of his, he writes:

> But, speaking seriously, I do not know what flowerets you are talking about, unless, perchance, it is that little book in which I painted some flowers for you when we were together, and which has again recently fallen into my hands, I know not how. But beware, my dearest Sasboud, how you devote yourself to this trick of painting, lest your love for literature forsake you.[5]

As this letter was written most probably in 1488, when Erasmus was twenty-two years old, it serves to show that this was the period of his painting, and also that he realized that not art but literature was going to be his life's work.

It will be interesting to know what were his accomplishments at this formative period of his history. From the epistle to Grunnius we have already learned that he was well versed in logic, physics, metaphysics, and moral philosophy even before entering Steyn, not to mention his already considerable knowledge of the Latin language. In addition to this he had cultivated the arts of poetry and painting, and, when the product of his muse is compared with that of his contemporaries, he holds fair rank among the poets of his time. But it was through his skill in the Latin tongue that he first drew to himself the attention of his superiors, and afterwards that of a gradually increasing circle of admirers outside the monastery walls. This was the study of his predilection, his recreation and solace. His frail physique and uncertain health naturally precluded his participating in the vigorous exercises and pastimes of his more robust companions, so that he was thrown as a consequence into mental and intellectual forms of relaxation. Steyn had a well-filled library, rich in codices of the classical authors; and it was there that he found rest and refreshment of spirit whenever his duties permitted him the opportunity. At Deventer and at Bois-le-Duc he had already mastered Terence, Ovid, and Horace, to the extent that he knew them by heart and could quote them by the page; but now at Steyn he had found and absorbed the works of Cicero, Juvenal, Seneca, Vergil, and many of the Greek authors, Latin translations of

[4] Brockwell, *op. cit.*, p. 46-7.

[5] "Vt autem serio loquar, quos flosculos dixeris non video; nisi forte libellum illum, in quo quosdam tibi flores, cum vna essemus, depinxeram; qui quidem nescio quo pacto ad nos nuper rediit. . . . At tu, Sasboude, sodalium meorum carissime, caue te adeo huic pingendi artificio dedas, vt literarum tibi cura recedat." (Eras. Ep. 16.)

whose works he had discovered in the monastery library. And this by no means completes the list of the classical writers whom he had mastered, as the many quotations scattered through his letters to friends at this time will show. It was here and now that he first became acquainted with the works of St. Jerome, whose writings influenced his own compositions during the rest of his life. St. Augustine came under his notice, as also the works of many others of the Fathers of the Church. His tremendous industry is the thing that first strikes the student of his life at this period. Combined with this, however, was a most remarkable memory; and this explains his wonderful facility of quotation. Though these two gifts have often militated against the success of writers, as in some measure preventing original thinking, they do not seem to have done so in the case of Erasmus. In any case, we can readily see that his conversation must have been instructive, suggestive, and entertaining, as a result of these attributes, which, somewhat rare at any time, must have been exceedingly so in his day, before the art of printing had made common the sources of our learning. To become the fortunate possessor of the works of any writer in that period, it was necessary to copy laboriously by hand every word and every line; even the mistakes of long series of copyists being unwittingly perpetuated. So we can realize the affection of the giver and the magnitude of the gift which he made to a dear friend of those days, when he writes to him: "I pray you accept this codex written by my own hand, which I am sending you as a pledge and reminder of our mutual love, and which has cost me more labor in the emendation than in the copying." [6]

And in the same letter we gain some knowledge of his method of absorbing the very marrow of his author where he says: "They do not seem to me truly to love their books who keep them spotless and under lock and key, but those rather who soil them by nightly and daily handling, who wrinkle and deface them, who scribble variorum notes here and there on the margins, and who prefer visible blots and erasures to errors hidden in the work itself." [7]

He soon learned to look abroad for kindred spirits, and sought to engage in correspondence the brightest minds of neighboring monasteries, or wherever else occasion might waft an opportunity in his direction. In this way he started a controversy with Cornelius Lopsen or Aurotinus, a young priest of Gouda, about the merits of Laurentius Valla, to which we have already referred on a previous page. In the same way and to the same end he wrote to James Canter, a young man of remarkable attainments who was at that time assisting the press of Leeu at Antwerp, and who had edited and issued editions of Proba and Petrarch. We give some of his letter to Canter:

> Though for a long time, my most learned James, a great desire to write to you has possessed me, yet up to the present the lack of suitable messengers has prevented it, especially since I was uncertain where my letter might reach you. . . . But you will say, "Why this

[6] Eras. Ep. 31, l. 24. [7] *Idem.*, l. 31.

great desire to see me?" Well, just from the great regard that I entertain towards you. Then you will perhaps say, "Whence comes this regard, when I am not only unacquainted with you, but have never even seen you?" A queer comment, forsooth: as if you ever scrutinized your own face. However, the thing of importance in this matter is that your worth is well known to me, and your talent most evident; and, if you had possessed neither of these to make you famous, the renown of your father would have rendered you conspicuous. . . . Yet that you may not consider me in all this to be led on by hearsay, for I do not easily believe things, Gerard Leeu the printer, a very charming man, was the first to confirm my opinion about you. For I accompanied him, when he was leaving us recently, to the banks of the river Yssel, which he had to cross, the while he narrated to my eager ears many things about you, which greatly increased my regard. Without delay I took care to procure a copy of the poem of the woman writer Proba, for I had heard it was your own work; which when I began to read over, and had found it was Proba's, I was not much taken by it. But your letter and prologues so delighted me that my mind, even after repeated readings, was hardly able to be appeased. For they show so much of the ancient eloquence and erudition that, had not Friesland, out of all this world, been already honored by your birth, no one would imagine that you were born in that barbarous region, nor in this age. Since therefore, dear James, I find that you are a man not only most wonderfully gifted in literary matters, but also a most sincere patron of letters, it seemed that I ought to ask you, first, that we should entertain for each other a mutual affection, which is a very pleasant thing to exist between any two people, but especially agreeable between persons of a literary bent; secondly, that you would continue as you do to merit well of literature, now, alas, cruelly stifled, and labor to drive away that black barbarism now dominating almost the whole world; and finally, that by an interchange of letters, since social intercourse is denied us, we may relieve the tedium of absence. If you grant me this, you will do something both very agreeable to me and most worthy of your reputation. I cannot write more, nor do I deem it necessary, for the bearer of this will tell you everything when he sees you, as he is associated with me in my studies as well as in other matters. Farewell, and try to esteem me in return.[8]

This letter, of which we have given only a part, shows the methods that Erasmus employed to make the acquaintance of the literary leaders of his day, and, at the same time, to make known to them who and what he himself was. It was somewhat fulsome in style, and serves to show that he had already recognized one of the weaknesses of the literary tribe, of which he did not hesitate to make use for the gaining of his own ends. Many of his letters having the same end and purpose might be cited, but we think we have sufficiently established the fact. In pro-

[8] *Ibid.*, l. 32.

portion as he secured literary connections outside the monastery walls, he began to feel the limitations of the monastic life. Endowed as he was with a prodigious capacity for study, and loving it for its own sake, it is not difficult to imagine that in a very short time he must have left all his young brethren of the monastery far behind, and, as a consequence, was probably the object of some invidious distinctions at the hands of the younger element among the monks. The monastic life may or may not curb the innate instincts of human nature, depending on how far along the road of perfection the individual has progressed. The gifted are not always properly humble, and certainly humility was not a prominent virtue of Erasmus. Comparing himself with his brethren, he could readily see that he was in a class far beyond them in all literary accomplishments. William Herman and Servatius were of some service to him, but only in the way of acting as material on which to try his expanding mental powers. The rest of the brethren were negligible quantities as far as he was concerned, and they cordially resented his attitude towards them, having no hesitation in making their sentiments known to him as offensively as possible. There is nothing so irritating to the average man as a tone of conscious superiority assumed by his fellow-man. This will arouse the baser feelings of the multitude at any time, and it was something of this sort that forced from Erasmus, when writing to Servatius, the remark, "You see with what an uproar they rage against everything, and I do not imagine you are unaware of the little leisure left to me amid these tribulations of life." [9] And in his letter to Servatius, written many years afterwards, he speaks of having gained in those early days "the jealousy of many and the contempt of everybody." [10] Possibly the brethren had sufficient justification for their actions, or at least they may have thought so. We have only one side of the story, the one given us by Erasmus. That he could be indiscreet we have abundant evidence; that he had a caustic utterance is visible in many things he wrote; that he was not in the habit of turning the other cheek when attacked we well know; so we may conclude that if he were unhappy with his fellow-monks at Steyn, there were probably faults on both sides.

Too much importance should not be attached to his letters to Servatius. Although they undoubtedly caused much trouble for Servatius, and probably gave a chance to some of his brethren to ridicule Erasmus, yet if the present writer might hazard a guess he would say that those ardent letters were only the ebullitions of a young and neurotic monk, who at that particular time was indulging in a too concentrated diet of Ovid's *Ars amatoria,* or similar pabulum. However this may be, we may conclude from several remarks in these letters to Servatius that Erasmus was not on friendly terms with the greater part of his brethren. He used to say that his countrymen despised literature, and we know that our forefathers of the middle ages were heavy eaters and drinkers, habits which were not at all conducive to study.[11] Erasmus, with his constitutional abstemiousness at table, might well have conceived a repugnance to the grosser customs of his brethren, and was

[9] *Ibid.*, 11, l. 7. [10] *Ibid.*, 296, l. 56. [11] *Ibid.*, 296.

possibly not in the least reticent in making his disgust known to them. Several times in after days he commented on their failings in this respect in no kindly manner. As Milman says, "He was a member of a fraternity who looked on him with jealousy and estrangement, on whom he looked with ill concealed aversion, perhaps contempt. He was one of them, but not of them." [12] He was vindictive and had a good memory; and Froude hits the mark for once when he says that Erasmus never forgot an injury.[13]

But there was one who was looking on all this with a serene countenance but with a troubled soul, and that was Brother Nicholas Werner, "of blessed memory," as Erasmus called him many years afterwards.[14] At the time of which we are treating he was one of the elder brethren at Steyn, and from all that we can glean about him from the letters which Erasmus wrote to him, we learn that he was a kind and saintly man. He evidently watched closely the career of his younger brother, and sympathized with him in his hopes and tribulations. He it was who first showed Erasmus a light in the darkness, a prospect of freedom, a beacon of hope, by pointing out to him the possibility of obtaining some appointment outside the monastery walls. We may easily comprehend the feelings of the elder man as he saw in Erasmus the reflection of his own youth, filled with longings and aspirations, some of them realized, but how many destined forever to remain unrealized only himself would ever know. But he was a reader of character, skilful in tracing actions back to their motives, an observer of the outward indications of mental unrest, and possessed of a kind and generous heart. He was not the Prior at this time, but was undoubtedly of considerable influence among his brethren, who shortly elected him to the position at the next vacancy. So when he saw this marvelously gifted youth baited and harassed by the unthinking younger monks, who held him to rigid account for every sharp retort or sarcastic fling, he came to the rescue, as far as he was able, by advising him to obtain permission from his superiors to take service under some bishop, where he might have an opportunity to use for the greater honor and glory of God the wondrous talents with which he had been endowed.[15] So, in the present writer's opinion, the world owes Erasmus to William Montjoy, to Anna Borselen, to Henry of Bergen, but most of all, and in an especial manner, to Nicholas Werner, the kind, generous, high-minded, far-seeing, and unselfish monk, who advised, counseled, persuaded, and encouraged the young scholar, and helped to smooth away the difficulties from his path. What anxious moments were those to Erasmus! What consultations between the Prior, Brother Nicholas, and Erasmus, while applications were being sent to various bishops who might have an opening in their dioceses for such a candidate as our young monk! Surely, never was there a candidate with better qualifications for any position requiring learning and a facile pen; and it is not to be wondered at that the employment of his talents and the gratification of his future ambitions were soon provided for, and in an apparently ideal

[12] *Savonarola, Erasmus, etc.*
[13] *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, p. 5.
[14] Eras. Ep. 296.
[15] *Idem.*, ll. 164-169.

capacity. On his part he had left no opportunity unused to make himself known to the outer world. He had sent copies of his youthful productions to all those whose influence he sought to gain; among others, to Alexander Hegius and Bartholomæus of Cologne, two able German scholars, the former of whom had been his preceptor at Deventer; also to Englebert Schut of Leyden, a celebrated Dutch writer whom he propitiated with a poem. Some of his effusions had also been carried by a friendly hand to Utrecht, and Allen surmises that the reason was to win the favor of the bishop of that city, David of Burgundy, who was the ecclesiastical superior of the diocese in which Steyn was situated.[16]

How it was finally brought about that he was to go as private secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai, Henry of Bergen, we are not exactly able to say, but we are permitted to conjecture that his fame as a Latin scholar had traveled far and wide, and it was this accomplishment of his which made the Bishop of Cambrai offer him the position aforesaid. In the *Compendium,* he says that "he had become known to the Bishop of Cambrai by chance." [17] This happened at a time when the Bishop was contemplating a trip to Rome, where he was expecting a Cardinal's hat. Needless to say, Erasmus jumped at the offer and hastened to obtain the necessary permission from his own bishop, as well as the consent of his Provincial and Superior. As this whole affair was a very unusual departure from the accustomed order of things, and as it might arouse petty jealousies among the rest of the brethren, strict secrecy was enjoined on Erasmus; and not even to his bosom friends Herman and Servatius was he permitted to divulge his anticipations. Indeed, Herman reproached him with this secrecy in no measured terms, and some little jealousy is evident in his first letter to Erasmus after the latter's departure from Steyn. He states succinctly that he had urged, begged, and besought the Prior that permission might be given him to accompany Erasmus, but was refused. Upon this refusal he became very angry and used some harsh terms to the Prior, all of which is very natural and very boyish. Then he goes on to say:

> I cannot get over my surprise that you not only consulted no one about your departure, but that you did not even tell me what you had in mind; though to do the former might argue prudence, yet the latter would certainly evince some sort of kindness towards me. However, you seem to have acted neither as a prudent man nor as a friend. But still your many acts of kindness towards me plainly show the love you bear me, while your wonderful learning and your many other good qualities satisfactorily demonstrate your prudence. Whence I conclude that you kept the matter secret because you feared that I might be an impediment to you if I knew of it beforehand. I cannot tell you how eager I am to see you back, Erasmus (for with whom may I live more largely?), provided your return shall be for your own interests and honor. What troubles you have

[16] *Ibid.,* 28, ll. 18-27, and notes. [17] *Ibid.,* II, ll. 94-5.

escaped none knows better than I, who am now tossed about in the same commotions. I often congratulate you on your good fortune in having extricated yourself from them. I sustain myself with the examples of great men. I keep before my eyes the undeserved prison of that noble man Socrates, and I reflect on the harsh servitude of the great Plato himself. So I live wholly for literature, and so, with the aid of a little philosophy, I not only forget my troubles, but can even laugh at them. But how are you getting along there? Do things suit you? Well enough? Is everything as you thought it would be, or as you would wish it to be? Farewell.[18]

Depressed and lonely after the departure of Erasmus, and just a little piqued and jealous at his success, Herman appears very human in the note of discontent in this letter. But he had a sunny disposition and bore what tribulations he had to bear with far more equanimity than his friend ever could.[19]

Erasmus must have felt some natural regret on leaving Steyn, where he had spent five pregnant years, whose influence on his future life is incalculable. Herman wrote a poem on the occasion, the first verse of which runs as follows:

At nunc sors nos diuellit, tibi quod bene vortat,
Sors peracerba mihi,
Me sine solus abis, tu Rheni frigora et Alpes
Me sine solus adis,
Italiam, Italiam lætus penetrabis amœnam.

And so he was started on his way to become Latin secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai, to which office was probably added that of chaplain, for we find that the Bishop of Utrecht ordained him a priest before dismissing him to his brother of Cambrai. He was ordained on April 25, 1492, being then not quite twenty-six years old; and thus he parted with the old life at Steyn to launch his career on the great ocean of the world at about the same time that Columbus was fitting out his caravels at Palos.

[18] *Ibid.*, 33.

[19] Allen in his prefatory notes to Eras. Ep. 33 gives interesting details of the after life of William Herman.

CHAPTER V

SECRETARY TO THE BISHOP OF CAMBRAI; MATRICULATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS

The Bishop kept him about his person, using his talents where he could and permitting him to continue his beloved studies in his leisure hours. The Bishop seems to have appreciated him very much, as we find that he took him with him to his ancestral home at Bergen-op-Zoom. This visit was productive of much good for Erasmus, as it was here that he first made the acquaintance of James Batt, who was destined to be of great service to him in the immediate future.

And here it might be well to say something about the Bishop of Cambrai, Erasmus' earliest patron. Henry of Bergen was the eldest surviving son of the hereditary lord of Bergen-op-Zoom. His elder brother Philip had fallen with his sovereign Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy and Brabant, on the field of Nancy fifteen years before. Of several younger brothers, John, who succeeded the Bishop in 1502 as lord of Bergen, was for many years a prominent figure at the court of Brussels; and Anthony, who became a close friend of Erasmus, was Abbot of the great monastery of St. Bertin at St. Omer. So we can easily see that Erasmus had fallen in with powerful and influential friends; and we shall also see that he made the utmost use of his position with them to advance his own interests and further his own ambitions, purposes in themselves entirely laudable if pursued in a grateful and appreciative spirit.

Few details of his life with the Bishop have come down to us, but we can glean from hints in his letters that Erasmus had a very high regard for his patron, who seems to have been no ordinary man. Besides his position as a member of a noble and powerful house in Brabant, and in addition to his occupancy of the important bishopric of Cambrai, he was a man of sound education and high character. His scholarship had been crowned with the degree of Doctor of Laws, and he had held the weighty office of Abbot of St. Denis-en-Broqueroie. In 1493 he received the honor of Chancellor of the Golden Fleece, the highest post in the order next that of the king, who was hereditary Grand Master. His position as Chancellor made him the greatest dignitary of the Burgundian court; while in his position as bishop he performed the marriage ceremony for Philip the Fair and Joanna of Spain, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, besides officiating at many other royal functions. He was sent on an embassy to England in 1498, and was prominent in other public and honorable positions. With such a man for his patron the future of our young monk was secure, and he was probably for a time very happy. He was living in a learned and

intellectual circle, surrounded with the evidences of dignity and wealth and performing duties of a congenial nature. One of his new friends was James Anthonisz, the Vicar-General of the diocese, who had just written his work, *De praecellentia potestatis imperatoriae,* and with whom he lived on terms of friendly intercourse. Another friend was a canon of the Cathedral, and preceptor to Philip, Archduke of Burgundy, whom he used to style "my very uncommon friend." This friendship was brought about by William Herman, for he writes to the Canon as follows:

> You have there Erasmus, the most learned man of our age; but I had better say nothing, lest I may seem to be deceived through my regard for him. I enjoyed the closest intimacy with him while it was possible; and there is nothing more grievous to me than the loss of his company. The Bishop of Cambrai, that patron of literature, has taken him under his care. Therefore, if you wish to cultivate the friendship of so learned, sincere, solid, and withal pleasant a man, believe me, you will derive a great measure of enjoyment therefrom.[1]

But undoubtedly the best and most serviceable friend whom he met while in attendance on the Bishop at Bergen was James Batt, whom we have already mentioned. He was born in Bergen, and had studied at the University of Paris. Returning to his native place, he had become principal of the High School, but gave this up to become Town Clerk, which post he held when Erasmus came to Bergen. Never was there a more devoted, energetic, self-sacrificing friend than Batt; and never was there a more patient, abused, flattered, cajoled, wheedled, but always faithful and willing, victim. His acquirements early attracted the attention of Erasmus, and he used to praise him most enthusiastically. Writing to Adolphus of Veere, of whom more hereafter, he congratulates him on having had such a preceptor as James Batt, "a man of rare abilities in all that pertains to philosophy and Platonic learning, a person of exquisite culture, as remarkable for the uprightness of his life as for the elegance of his conversation." [2] He sounded his praises so highly to William Herman at Steyn that the latter was filled with a consuming desire to know him; and to that end wrote him a letter filled with fulsome adjectives, in which he urged that any friend of Erasmus was by that very fact a friend of his, and asked for the privilege of his friendship, saying somewhat vainglorioously that he would make not only the present, but also the future, generations aware of their mutual affection.[3] Then he indited to him an ode, which "Declares his extraordinary affection for James Batt, a most upright man, who was secretary of the Town Council of Bergen, and having learned of his character from Erasmus, who at that time lived in close intimacy with him, how ardent was his desire of seeing the man, let this Ode testify."[4]

The plague having begun to rage in Bergen, and probably also at Brussels, Erasmus was permitted by the Bishop to retire to Halsteren,

[1] Eras. Ep. 38, ll. 70-76.
[2] Eras., *De virtute amplectenda.*
[3] Eras. Ep. 35, l. 127.
[4] *Sylua odarum,* ode 4: title.

where the latter evidently had a country residence. There he set himself in real earnest to the task of finishing his work which he had entitled the *Antibarbari,* and on which he had from time to time been hitherto engaged. Writing to his friend Cornelius Gerard, he says:

> You ask me what I am doing. I have in hand a literary work which I have long been threatening to finish, so I am working on it while rusticating here, but what it will amount to I do not know. My intention is to complete it in two parts. The first part will be occupied mostly in refuting the silly reasonings of the barbarians [it is thus Erasmus used to style all those who were disposed to belittle the importance of the study of the ancient classics], and in the second part I will make you and other learned men of your kind speak in the praise of literature. So, since the glory of it will be common to us both, it is proper that the labor should also be common. If, therefore, you have read anything (for what is there that you have not read?) which you think pertains to this subject, that is, wherein the pursuit of literature is blamed or praised, I pray you send it to me, and generously share it with me for old friendship's sake.[5]

But suddenly the sky of his happiness is overcast, and he is called upon to bear one of the severest disappointments of his life. The Bishop announced that the visit to Italy was to be cancelled. So in a moment all his dreams and visions of seeing sunny Italy, and all that such a visit means to the scholar of every age and every clime, vanished in the dim distance. This sudden frustration of his hopes was hard to bear, for there was nothing of the heroic about our Erasmus, and he became very much depressed. The cause of this abrupt change in the Bishop's plans is somewhat obscure. Erasmus says that it was a lack of money; but it is in the famous *Compendium* that he says it, and the present writer regards that document somewhat doubtfully, it being in his opinion an instrument written solely for the purpose of making obscure things more so.[6] It does not seem probable that the Lord Bishop of Cambrai, with all his magnificence and worldly dignities, his position at the court of Burgundy, his friendship with Philip the Fair and consequently his opportunity to obtain the assistance of the Spanish court, could have failed to obtain the coveted hat, had only a few thousand ducats stood in the way. Nor must we forget that his position of Chancellor of the Order of the Golden Fleece, of which a king was Grand Master, and whose membership was at that time limited

[5] Allen says that to amuse his leisure at Halsteren the *Antibarbari* was revised and cast into the form of a dialogue, the opening scene of which is doubtless drawn, according to Erasmus' frequent custom, from life. In it Herman comes on a visit to Erasmus and meets Batt for the first time, an incident which is possibly substantiated by the conversation with Batt which Herman records in Ep. 38. The scene is laid in the spring, the Burgomaster and Town-physician come over from Bergen to take part in the dialogue; their names, William Conrad and John, are mentioned, and facts of Batt's previous life are given in a way which imparts an air of reality to the narrative. *Idem,* 37. *See also* Vol. I, App. V.

[6] *Vide supra.*

to twenty-four of the noblest and wealthiest knights of Christendom, would have brought him all the assistance in a financial way that he desired, had he stood in need of it. No, we must look elsewhere for the reason of this sudden change of plan. And where more likely than to Rome, where political intrigue was rampant, where Cardinals' hats were few and applicants many? And the Bishop had made enemies for himself in Rome, where memories were good, and nothing was forgotten that might one day be of service to remember. It seems that, when Sixtus IV had appointed him Bishop of Cambrai in 1480, the Bishop had been so indiscreet as to refuse to surrender his Abbacy of St. Denis-en-Broqueroie, and had retained it and its revenues for seven years. However, on his return from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1487, he visited Rome,[7] and at that time probably made his peace with the ecclesiastical authorities. At about the period when he entertained hopes of receiving the coveted Cardinal's hat, which was when he had appropriated to himself the learning and ability of Erasmus, he had very injudiciously and forcibly installed his brother Antony as Abbot of St. Bertin at St. Omer, in spite of the fact that the monks of that monastery had already elected James du Val as abbot, and that the Bishop of Gibel had consecrated him to the position. There must have been some rather acrimonious feelings existing between the two bishops, for the Pope was called upon to settle the matter and gave his decision in favor of the Bishop of Cambrai, annulling the election of the other occupant. Now the Bishop of Gibel was a prominent member of the Dominican Order and probably did not forget the discredit put upon him by his brother bishop of Cambrai, and it is possible that the general of the Dominican Order at Rome had something to do with defeating the hopes of the Bishop of Cambrai as a candidate for cardinalitial honors. It is also possible that Alexander VI had a good memory, for he had been Vice-Chancellor of the Roman See for thirty-five years, and must have remembered the previous difficulty of a very similar nature, wherein the Bishop had forcibly maintained his assumed rights. It may have been a question with the Pope as to whether it were good judgment on his part to admit to the Sacred College of Cardinals so vigorous a vindicator of his own peculiar ideas.

Be all this as it may, the Bishop's hopes were definitely and finally dashed, and he no longer had urgent need of a Latin secretary to couch his correspondence with high Church dignitaries in choice Latin. It is hard to say whether the Bishop or Erasmus was the more disappointed; but Erasmus ever afterwards nursed a special grudge against the above-mentioned Bishop of Gibel, as if realizing that he had done him some terrible injury. We have previously intimated that Erasmus was a good hater, so it need not surprise us when he calls that bishop "a man of impious life,[8] . . . a man than whom there was none more corrupt, none more avaricious, none more arrogant."[9]

The sudden turn in his affairs as narrated above certainly served to depress and cast down our young scholar; but he was volatile by

[7] Burchard, *Diarium*, ed. Thuasne, Vol. I, pp. 179, 282.
[8] Eras. Ep. 12, l. 11. [9] *Ibid.*, 130, l. 63.

nature and reacted quickly. He was wise and far-seeing enough to perceive that his usefulness, as far as the Bishop of Cambrai was concerned, was at an end; and he immediately began to devise ways and means whereby the Bishop and his relatives might be made use of in the furtherance of his own interests. To that end he took his friend Batt into his confidence, and, after many long interviews, much exchange of letters, and interchange of opinions, it was decided that Erasmus should obtain permission from the Bishop to study at the University of Paris. Then came the question of ways and means, and it was here that Batt's help was most needed. The Bishop, though just, was not lavish, at least in Erasmus' opinion, and hence the plan was to seek additional help from other sources. A short letter from Erasmus to Batt will give us an insight into their ideas of the matter:

> I am glad that my letters have reached your hands; for I was afraid that the mariner, a somewhat heedless fellow, might have carried out my instructions in a careless manner. But your letter was so long wished and waited for that I opened it on the boat, and read it immediately. Then various feelings affected my mind; for at the first glance I was a little angry with you for sending me such a short letter. Indeed I could wish you to write not letters but volumes to me, such is my longing for my Batt. So perusing it with flying eye, so to speak, when I read that you had been sick with a most unremitting fever, as you state, I was all of a tremble, and with fixed attention I read it over more closely. But when I gleaned from your letter that you were convalescing I was immediately relieved from my sorrow and anxiety, and so read the rest of it more cheerfully.
>
> My dearest Batt, I leave the whole matter to your prudent discretion, but again and again I warn you not to hazard my interests by any inopportune solicitations. First you must take care to counsel with your Erasmus; then, if my application to learning, my recommendations, or my writings are worth anything, I will in turn furnish all needful to equip you for the task. That my letter pleased the Lord of Bergen is good to hear; but it was not written only to please him, but to induce him to grant my request. What chance there is of that you neglected to state. I have besought you with what vehemence I could, and now again I beseech, I beg, and I implore you, dear Batt, to exercise the greatest care in this affair, which is so near to my heart. To that end read my letters so diligently that you may feel nothing therein was thoughtlessly, though possibly confusedly, expressed. Farewell.[10]

Thus 'mid hope and fear Erasmus challenged the world for a place therein, and Batt was his faithful and kindly henchman, ready at all times and under all circumstances to subserve his interests and do him loyal service. For by now at least Erasmus had tasted the sweet savor of fame, and had hitched his chariot to that star, while Batt had hitched his wagon to Erasmus. The latter had already embalmed the name of

[10] *Ibid.*, 42.

Batt in the *Antibarbari* and had certainly promised a share of the renown which he felt he was sure to win to his staunch and trusty adherent. So the great project was broached to the Bishop, as well as to his brother the Abbot of St. Bertin, and also, as is very probable, to Lord Walhain, another brother who was then or shortly afterwards the head of the family. We have no record that anyone outside of the Bergen family came to his assistance at this time, though he received plenty of help from other sources afterwards. But the upshot of the matter was that the Bishop granted the desired boon, and gave his consent that Erasmus should go to the University of Paris to study for a degree in Theology, the Bishop furnishing the money for present expenses, and promising him a pension in addition. Now all this is very much to the Bishop's credit, when we consider the manner and purpose of Erasmus' coming to him.

The University of Paris was famous all over the continent for its courses in philosophy and theology; and it was in the latter that Erasmus wished to win his degree. When a student considered himself ready for examination he offered himself for the test, and won or lost on his merits or demerits as the case might be. As Erasmus was a priest, the good Bishop of Cambrai had procured for him a bursary or scholarship in a charitable foundation connected with the University, and known as the College of Montaigu. There was undoubtedly a great contrast between the Bishop's palace and this college, and Erasmus missed the sumptuous fare and the assiduous attention to bodily comfort that the episcopal residence had so long furnished him. So, true to his custom, he began to complain of his hardships; and where we would expect some little appreciation of what had been done for him, we find only torrents of abuse for everybody and everything connected with the college. But this was characteristic of him, as we have already seen, so we need not be surprised to hear that the College of Montaigu was a terrible place. The very walls breathed theology, lice were plentiful, beds were hard, food was coarse and scanty, vigils and work so severe that within a year the first trial brought many youths of good qualities and fair promise, some to their deaths, some to blindness, some to madness, and not a few to leprosy.[11]

The Father Superior was one John Standonck, who, he says, "was a man not of a bad disposition, but of poor judgment. To restrain the wantonness of youth by reason and moderation is a father's duty; but was he doing so when in the depth of a severe winter he gave them a mouthful of bread, and then sent them to the well for water, where they often had to break the ice, and the water when obtained was fetid and pestilential? How many putrid sheep were eaten there? How much mouldy wine was drunk?"[12]

It is more than probable that John Standonck, having under his charge some hundred untamed and lusty youths to keep in some sort of control, was more interested in the *fortiter in re* than in the *suaviter in modo*. In this attitude he was not different from his contemporaries, who, as far as the author has been able to ascertain, never believed in

[11] See his Colloquy *Ichthyophagia.* [12] *Ibid.*

the coddling process as applied to boys. The early history of Oxford and Cambridge, and later, of Harvard and Yale, shows similar customs and modes of living, with regard to the frugal breakfast which succeeded the bringing in of the wood for the day's fire, and the thawing of the ice for the morning's ablutions. In those days there were no steam-heating appliances, no running water, no bathrooms with hot and cold showers, no electric lights, and no elevators. Our ancestors suffered from the same heat and cold, the same bad sanitary arrangements, and, barring the lice, endured all the inconveniences of their time with equanimity. They may have had positive opinions on the too frequently recurring mutton stew, or have registered more or less silent protests on the appearance of hash that was too reminiscent of the penultimate, or even antepenultimate meal. But they bore it manfully and did not deem it necessary to impress a sympathetic posterity with the fact that their sufferings "made some of them blind, drove others to madness, and infected not a few with leprosy." As for wine, they had none, neither mouldy nor otherwise. But not so with Erasmus. The place did not please him, the food was not what he had been accustomed to, the teachers did not cater to his peculiarities; so, with his usual forgetfulness of the fact that he was receiving this food and education gratis, he dipped his pen in satire and besmirched the fair name of the College of Montaigu, its teachers, and all belonging to it, for all time. And Rabelais, who never attended the college, but had read the *Ichthyophagia* on its appearance in print, helped to blacken further the college by putting in the mouth of Ponocrates the allegations of Erasmus which it contains.[18] Crevier, in his *Historie de l'Université de Paris,* has this to say on the matter:

> The object that Standonck proposed for himself was the instruction of poor scholars. He saw with pain that the scholarships founded in the colleges of the University for the poor were most frequently invaded by rich incumbents. . . . He wished, then, that his house should be an asylum for the really poor, among whom are met, as he remarks himself (and he was himself an example of it), lofty spirits of happy disposition that poverty had reduced to a state unworthy of their talents, and who, when well educated, became great men, and columns of the Church. It was with this view partly, and also to preserve the scholarships of Montaigu from the invasion of the rich, that Standonck subjected his pupils to a hard life, and to humiliating practices. At first, all the students went to the Chartreux to receive, in common with the poor, the bread which these monks used to give out at the door of their convent. Everybody knows how frugal was the food of these young men: bread, vegetables, eggs, herring, all in small quantity, and never meat. With this austere life, the students were constrained to observe all the fasts of the Church, to follow the quadrigesimal observance of Advent, to fast on Fridays, and also on particular occasions. Nothing was poorer than their clothes and their bed.

[18] Rabelais, p. 77. London, n. d.

> They rose early in the morning and sang much of the Office: then they worked in the kitchen, waited on table, swept the classrooms, the chapel, the dormitory, and the stairs.
>
> Everything breathes the love of poverty in the rules of Standonck. He desired that the Superior should be styled the minister or the father of the poor, and not master or principal, titles, according to him, too ostentatious; and the Superior was to be drawn from the number of the poor who have been educated in the house, so that having made his course of studies in the state of poverty, and having suffered all its inconveniences, he would know from his own experience how to rule others. . . . It can easily be seen that the spirit of all these rules resembled much the observances of conventual life. . . . The austere life prescribed by Standonck to the young men whom he educated has found a critic of large authority. Erasmus, who had himself passed through this discipline, censures the harshness of it, and recalls with bitterness its inconveniences, especially with regard to health. He recognizes the good intentions of Standonck, but he accuses him of cruelty. I could have wished that this great man had expressed himself with more moderation, and that he had had more regard for the reputation of a master to whom he owed, at least in part, his education. There are some obligations which lofty souls do not forget. Nevertheless, I do not pretend that his criticism was not well founded. The health of young men should be protected; and to fatigue the mind by study and the body by severe regimen, is to attack it on two sides. And so the discipline established by Standonck could not be maintained, and it was necessary to soften it . . . by express regulations. . . . All that I have written of Standonck marks in him a character that was virtuous but inflexible, and little susceptible to the touches which are necessary to make it amiable.[14]

We may safely conclude then that at the College of Montaigu the discipline was the strictest, the food plain and not too abundant, the sanitary arrangements bad; and we may add that it was not the very best place to which to send a young priest. But there is no doubt that Erasmus exaggerated his grievances there. Commenting on the Iliad of his woes as above described, Seebohm is of the opinion that they are probably caricatured, and perhaps too much magnified to be taken literally.[15]

We find ourselves growing impatient with these littlenesses of Erasmus, and have constantly to remind ourselves that he was not physically robust, and, on account of his nervous temperament, felt trivial discomforts more keenly than the ordinary student. The same strain of ingratitude is evident in his comments on the fare at Queen's College, Cambridge, where, writing to Ammonius, he says, "I do not mind being hungry provided I am allowed to live";[16] and in another

[14] *Histoire de l'Université de Paris,* Vol. V, p. 22-29. Paris, 1761.

[15] See *Oxford Reformers,* p. 102, note. London, 1887. Also Rashdall, *Mediæval Universities,* passim.

[16] Eras. Ep. 240.

letter he complains that "by mutually warming each other we feel the cold less." [17]

Besides this trait of littleness, a certain amount of megalomania had grown up in him, which time was strengthening rather than diminishing. We have seen him claiming at Deventer to know more than his teachers; and now at the College of Montaigu he makes the same assertion, describing his teachers there as men of "the most rotten brains, the most barbarous conversation, the dullest intellects, the most barren learning, the coarsest manners, the most spiteful tongues, and the blackest hearts." [18] We are here strongly reminded of a similar outburst on the part of another famous neurasthenic, Edward Gibbon, author of the *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* who felt it incumbent on himself to besmirch the characters of his teachers and the sort of learning taught at Magdalen College, Oxford, during his residence there.

> I spent fourteen months [he says] at Magdalen College, the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life; the reader will pronounce between the school and the scholar; but I cannot affect to believe that nature had disqualified me for all literary pursuits. . . . The fellows of my time were decent easy men, who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the founder. . . . From the toil of reading, or thinking, or writing, they had absolved their conscience; and the first shoots of learning and ingenuity withered on the ground, without yielding any fruits to the owner or the public. . . . Their conversation stagnated in a round of college business, Tory politics, personal anecdotes, and private scandal; their dull and deep potations excused the brisk intemperance of youth. . . .

This is so deliciously Erasmian that my attention has been called to other remarkable similarities between these two famous men which are irrelevant here. That his strictures were bitterly resented is evident from the numerous replies which they elicited. For fuller details the following may be consulted: *A Word or two in Vindication of the University of Oxford and of Magdalen College in particular, from the Posthumous Aspersions of Mr. Gibbon.* But every genius is an aristocrat, full of contempt for the common herd. He measures men by his own standard and finds them lacking. Hence he is impatient with their shortcomings and despises them in his heart. He is, moreover, not always successful in hiding his feelings towards them; and the result is that his contempt is answered with hatred. All this is especially true in the case of Erasmus, as we shall have many occasions to point out. Now, the College of Montaigu was not entirely devoted to the killing of its students; and Erasmus evidently found intellectual equivalents for the lack of physical comforts. We know that he delivered a course of sermons there *On the Praises of the Saints,* which he considered worthy of preservation. So, too, his reputation as a scholar had begun to extend beyond the college walls; and throughout the Uni-

[17] *Ibid.,* 238. [18] See the *Ichthyophagia.*

versity circles his name was being mentioned as that of a man from whom much might be expected. Hector Boece, who had been permitted by his patron Bishop Elphinstone to attend this same College of Montaigu, has nothing to say in its dispraise,[19] but testifies to the growing celebrity of Erasmus by calling him one of the learned men of Collège Montaigu.[20] As a matter of fact, he won many useful friends, among them the celebrated Robert Gaguin, who, being a much older man, was able to give him the benefit of his ripe experience. Gaguin was of French descent, but born in Flanders. Like Erasmus he was educated in a monastic school, and afterwards became a monk in the Trinitarian Order, of which he was later General. He won his degree of Doctor of Canon Law at the University of Paris in 1480, just as our Erasmus was trying to do, and this too was a bond of interest between the two scholars. He had a remarkable career as diplomatist, having been sent on embassies to Italy, Germany, Spain, and England. Allen says that he took a leading part in the introduction of printing into Paris, and was Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law in the University. His greatest work is the *Compendium de origine et gestis Francorum,* published in 1495. Erasmus prepared himself for his introduction to Gaguin by writing a hendecasyllabic poem in which he lauds Gaguin to the skies, and sent this with a long letter couched in his most Ciceronian Latin. It would seem that Gaguin had passed the period of life when flattery is pleasing, for in his reply, he very gently chides his young friend for being too fulsome.

> . . . I do not hinder others from passing on me any judgment they see fit. But it is disagreeable to me to have you pour the full flood of your oratory into the little stream of my merits; to endow me with the integrity of [C. Scipio] Nasica and the splendor of Nestor's eloquence, when I am only a pupil, and still learning. Do you wish me to tell you how I feel about it, Erasmus? . . . I wish that you would be more chary in writing my praises, and not let your pen run riot; not that praise makes me blush, but that praise given when undeserved is really flattery or falsehood. I am telling you the truth. As far as I can judge from your letter and your poem, I consider you a scholar, for which reason I desire your friendship just as much as you desire mine. Similarity of tastes is a bond of affection. So, if you consider that there has fallen to my share anything of learning and education, I freely proclaim that the entrance to my heart and affection is open to you, just as my doors are open to my friends. Lay aside all pretense of blandishment, and come with an open mind. Though you may think that you have a high opinion of me, retain your freedom of judgment; if not forget me entirely.[21]

[19] Was there from 1492 to 1498, and acted there as regent or professor. See D. N. B., art. "Boece," for other interesting details. The name is variously spelled Boice, Boece, and Boyce.

[20] Boece, *Aberdon. episcop. vitæ,* p. 88. Ed. Moir, 1894.

[21] Eras. Ep. 43.

What Gaguin objected to was very evident in the early letters of Erasmus; and coming from an older man to a young one, from an older writer to one with less experience, it was well applied, and made an impression not easily forgot. Erasmus' second letter pleased Gaguin very much, and he did not hesitate to say so. In addition to this, he allowed Erasmus to write for his book on the history of the Franks, which was then on the press, a complimentary letter, which was inserted at the end of the work, a high honor for a young writer in those days. It is our personal opinion that it was through Gaguin, with his large acquaintance in university circles, that Erasmus first met Andrelini, and possibly Mountjoy and the other young Englishmen who were afterwards to become such close friends. So we must account Erasmus fortunate in having met, so early in his Parisian career, this fine old man, who combined a thorough knowledge of men and their motives with an unselfish love of the younger race of writers by whom he was surrounded. And it was real and lasting help that he sought to give them; for commenting on the *Antibarbari* which Erasmus had sent for his perusal he counseled him as follows:

> You propose a subject conceived with much conciseness; you subdivide it very well, and you treat it with great talent. You connect your ideas very aptly, and you embellish them beautifully, nor is there any lack of the vigorous reasoning of Carneades. One thing, Erasmus, I know you will take in good part from a friend. You drag out the introduction a little too far, and perhaps someone may find fault with Batt's playing the first part, for without an interlocutor, he would be rather long-winded. For a lengthy dialogue is pleasing which refreshes and delights the listener by a frequent change of speakers. But do not take my judgment in the matter; consult those who are skilled in dialogue. They differ on certain points and subdivisions frequently, while on uninterrupted speeches they are rarely at variance. Plato himself among the Greeks, among the Latins Cicero and many other later writers, will be models for you. But I would be an absurd mentor for you if I were to try to add beauty to Venus. It will suffice if you eliminate what is redundant, and supply what is lacking." [22]

Another friend whose acquaintance Erasmus made at this time we have already mentioned in Hector Boece. Boece's patron was the celebrated Bishop Elphinstone, founder of King's College, Aberdeen, who was just then interested in introducing the art of printing into Scotland. As we have seen, Gaguin took an important part in introducing the same art into Paris; so, when we find Erasmus enjoying the friendship of Boece and Gaguin at the same period and in the same city, we naturally conclude that the latter two were old acquaintances into whose fellowship Erasmus had been admitted. It is also probable that, on account of their diplomatic associations, Elphinstone and Gaguin were intimate friends of long standing. In any case, Boece was an admirer of Erasmus, and had importuned him for copies of his writings, which

[22] *Ibid.*, 46.

subtle flattery, we all know, is sweetest incense to budding authors. So Erasmus replied in jocund vein:

> What do you mean by so many captious letters? What does such temerity indicate? You write exigently, you threaten, you revile, and finally you denounce open war on me unless I shall send you some of my poems. See how unjust you are, who ask me for what I have not. Indeed, I swear by all that is holy that I was never interested in such things; and if I indulged the muse when a boy I left all that in my native country. For I did not dare to bring to this celebrated University of Paris, where I see that the most finished writers in every kind of literature flourish, any of my barbarous, and stupid, and strange-sounding poems. But you will not believe me, and will suspect me of still writing poetry. You rascal, who made you think that I was a poet? For you constantly in your letters call me by that title of poet which was once so dignified and honorable but now, on account of the crass ignorance of many, is become so hateful.

Then he goes on in a lengthy epistle to show what in his estimation true poetry should be, and winds up, as we expected, by sending to his friend the offspring of his muse, adding ingenuously:

> If you are looking for the solid rather than the ambitious, I hope that you will not despise these poems of mine too much. But, good gracious, I almost forgot to impress upon you what I most desired. If you love me at all, show these trifles to no one. Farewell.[23]

So, with friends like these, and with the privilege of Gaguin's house and library, his year in the College of Montaigu could not have been so woeful as he depicts it. He had established solid connections with a great many of the most important and influential members of the literary circles both in and out of the University, and had also, which was equally valuable to him, seized that opportunity to show them the mettle that was in him.

[23] *Ibid.*, 47.

CHAPTER VI

STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY; FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES: PATRONAGE

At this time he fell so ill that he had to leave the College of Montaigu and return to the Bishop's hospitable mansion, where he was most kindly received and nursed back to health again. After this he made a short visit to Steyn, where he took counsel with his superiors for the future. According to his own testimony they advised him to return to Paris and continue his studies. He probably painted Collège Montaigu in such lurid colors that they made some sort of provision for him, sufficient at least so that he was no longer obliged to live there. It is likely also that conditions were then laid down for his future guidance, one of which must have been that he was to strive for a degree in Theology. This would be an honor for the monastery as well as for himself. It is regrettable that none of the letters that passed between him and the Prior of Steyn at this time has been preserved; but we fortunately have several to his old friend and fellow-monk Nicholas Werner, whom the reader may remember as having helped Erasmus with good advice in the stormy days which preceded his exit from the monastery. He writes to Brother Nicholas, after his return to Paris, as follows:

> I hope and trust that you are all well; as for myself, I feel fine, thank God. If anyone has hitherto been in doubt as to whether I really valued my theological studies, let facts speak for themselves. I may be talking somewhat boastfully, but it does not become Erasmus to conceal anything from his most affectionate father. By chance recently I met some English nobles, all men of the greatest influence. The other day there came to me a certain young and very wealthy priest, who had refused a bishopric because he felt himself to be not sufficiently well educated. Nevertheless he was to be renominated to the see by the king within a year, although he possessed an annual income of more than two thousand crowns, without any bishopric. When he heard of my literary accomplishments, he very zealously began to pay court to me and even to pay me great honor and respect; for he dwelt in the same house with me for some time. He offered me a hundred crowns if I would tutor him for a year; he offered me a benefice to fall out within a few months; and he desired to lend me three hundred crowns to be repaid from the receipts of the benefice, if I needed them to prepare myself for the filling of the position. By the acceptance of this benefice I should have gained the good will of all the English of this city, had I so desired, and through them of all England; for

they are all from the ranks of the nobility. I rejected this very generous offer, as well as prospects far more remunerative, and I rejected the prayers and the tears which accompanied them. I am telling you the truth, nor am I exaggerating; for these Englishmen know that I do not value all the money in the whole of England. Not rashly have I and do I refuse these offers; for no inducement shall cause me to forsake my theological studies. I came here to learn, not to teach or amass money. My aim is to seek a doctorate in Theology, God being willing. The Bishop of Cambrai esteems me highly; he makes liberal promises to me, but does not remit lavishly, to tell the truth. Beloved father, I hope you will continue in good health. I again and again ask that you will commend me in your prayers to Almighty God, and I shall do the same.

From my library at Paris, September 13, ⟨1496⟩.[1]

We learn from this letter that some of the brethren probably had insinuated that Brother Erasmus was neglecting theology for literature away off in Paris; so when he appeared at the monastery after his illness he felt it necessary to clear himself of this charge. Whether he was successful in so doing we have no means of knowing; but it furnishes us with an explanation of the above letter and his reason for turning away such magnificent offers. That there may have been some just grounds for the accusation is not impossible, for he did eventually do this very thing, and gave then the reasons why he did not wish to be a theologian, as we shall see further on. He must have come away from Steyn in no amiable frame of mind, however, and with no very charitable feelings towards those brethren of his who had made the charges. It rankled in his mind and strengthened still more his animus against his former fellow-monks; and years afterwards, when he was writing to Servatius, he said that this same Brother Nicholas was well aware of the mean behavior of his "little brothers," and had expressed his opinion of them, not in polished Latin, but in blunt Dutch. We must bear all these things in mind when we come to analyze Erasmus' terrible hatred of monks in general, and never forget that his feeling against them was intensely subjective and entirely personal. The same letter also shows us that he was now able to live in comfort, in private lodgings, and no longer obliged to undergo the austerities of the College of Montaigu; and it is with a touch of no small pride that he dates his letter "from my library at Paris."

All this added comfort he doubtless owed to the generosity of the Bishop of Cambrai and his relations, aided in some small measure by the authorities at Steyn. In the above letter he intimates that the Bishop was stingy, and all his biographers have accordingly stigmatized the Bishop unsparingly for this trait, but, in the opinion of the writer, unjustly. We have only to quote Erasmus against himself to see that the Bishop was a very generous patron indeed, and exceedingly kind to Erasmus at a period when our young monk had few friends. In fact, he generally addressed him in his letters as the kindest and most

[1] Eras. Ep. 48.

excellent of bishops, and in one in particular he calls him "my only Mæcenas." [2] Two years after he had arrived in Paris, he ends one of his letters to the Bishop in the following words: "Moreover, in a short time, expect from me some of the fruits of my studies, which I will dedicate especially to yourself. Illness has completely exhausted me, and both my flesh and pockets are very flabby. Food will cure the one, and money the other. Act in the matter as you have always done, and farewell." [3] Writing to Arnold Bostius, a Carmelite monk and literary friend, Erasmus tells him of his plans, and particularly of his design to visit Italy in order to obtain a degree there; but he fears that the expense would be enormous. Then he adds that "the Bishop of Cambrai gives sparingly. He is much more affectionate than generous, and is more prompt to promise than to perform. I am in the position of one who may not insist, yet there are many who force it out of him. However, for the time being, I will do what seems best." [4] And yet it was only a very short time before that Erasmus had asked and obtained the Bishop's help in publishing the poems of William Herman, the expense of which must have been considerable. In another letter to a medical friend he speaks about the coming embassy of the Bishop to England, and says that the affair has hurt his own chances. "For the Bishop, overwhelmed with business and anxious about the preparations for his journey, somewhat angry too because Prince Philip, in whose name he is sent, has furnished him only six hundred gold crowns, has treated me to many complaints but little money. And what is worse, here I linger at great expense to myself; nor am I supplied with a carriage or escort, and I must be in Paris at the very earliest." [5] Writing on the same topic to Brother Nicholas Werner, he says: "This embassy has made great havoc with my pockets, for the reason that the Bishop is very busy, and that he is in as much trouble as myself on account of having to make his preparations for his journey. For this distinguished man is sent to an opulent and ostentatious people with only six hundred florins at his disposal on the part of the Prince." [6]

It is to be feared that in these early days of his career Erasmus valued his friends more for what he could extract from them than for any other reason; but it is also probable that real necessity forced him to this. Then again, after he left the College of Montaigu, his habits of living naturally became more expensive, and the sum which the Bishop furnished him as a student in that institution, though ample for that purpose, was undoubtedly scanty to meet the increased cost of living in private apartments. But it is absurd to call the Bishop "a man of parsimonious spirit," and "a close-fisted patron," as Norcross does.[7] He was not obliged to be his patron at all. Erasmus to him was not the

[2] "Quod tibi vnico Mecenati omnia mea studia, quæcunque erunt, dicare certum sit." (Eras. Ep. 49.)

[3] "Me morbus prorsus exhausit, et cutis et loculi laxissimi sunt; illa carne, hi nummis sarciendi. Tu pro tua consuetudine facito ac bene vale." (Eras. Ep. 51.)

[4] Eras. Ep. 75, l. 20.

[5] *Ibid.*, 76, l. 23.

[6] *Ibid.*, 77, l. 16.

[7] *Amer. Hist. Asso. Report*, p. 365. 1898.

Erasmus that the world now knows, but only a clever young monk who might be serviceable to him. And, when the Bishop's plans for making use of him were upset by the loss of the coveted Cardinal's hat, he and other members of his family sent Erasmus at their own expense to the University of Paris, with an equipment for the purpose suitable for any ordinary young monk. But Erasmus was not an ordinary young monk, and everybody, including the Bishop, was soon made aware of the fact. He was no sooner established at the University than he began to make friends of the wealthy, the noble, and the learned. This was laudable but expensive, and the small allowance given him by the Bishop was not sufficient to stand the strain. Hence his constant demands for more money, which was not always forthcoming, due partly to the fact that the Bishop was an extremely busy man, and possibly to the fact that he considered he was supplying all the funds that, in his estimation, the case required. It was very natural that Erasmus should desire to have a little loose change in his pockets when in company with Andrelini or Mountjoy, but this was a contingency that had probably not occurred to the Bishop as being a necessary part of university expenses. So we read in the letters of Erasmus almost constantly at this period, "the Bishop gives little," or "the Bishop gives very sparingly," or "he is much more affectionate than generous, and is more prompt to promise than perform." And finally, in that famous and unreliable *Compendium* to which we have before referred, he says that the Bishop promised him a yearly stipend, but sent him nothing at all. Now, if it was really Erasmus who wrote this remarkable document, he stands convicted of untruth when he says that he received nothing from the Bishop.[8] The gentlest judgment we can pass on the matter is that he was dealing in hyperbole, a form of speech of which he was extremely fond. The truth is that the Bishop was kind to him until something in the conduct of Erasmus which seriously displeased him was brought to his attention, and from that time on he gave him very little assistance. What this was we have no means of knowing, but it is evident that it was something which was not in accordance with the character and dignity of a young priest. A few extracts from his letters will shed some little light on it. Writing from Paris to William Herman at Steyn, he says:

> I received a letter from N. [by N. is probably meant Nicholas Werner] in which he opens his mind to me very plainly as I had desired him to do. He does not dare to commend my line of study, for he says that by many it is not approved; and he also says that some people fear that I may become a source of trouble to my brethren should I get into debt. He complains of many things, as usual. I have eased the man's mind, although he said that personally he had no doubts, but simply wanted to satisfy certain others. He seems to be fond of me, and is well disposed towards you, judging from the kind way in which he writes to me about you. . . . You

[8] "Promissum est stipendium annuum; nihil missum est. Sic solent principes." (*Compedium,* Eras. Ep. II, l. 102.)

say there is much talk about me there. What kind of talk? If favorable, I rejoice; if otherwise, they shall see. Here certainly there is nothing but praise for me, perhaps not undeserved. In exhorting me to be virtuous, you act as becomes my William; and I in turn exhort you to cultivate earnestly both virtue and learning. . . . From the Bishop of Cambrai I receive nothing. Farewell.[9]

What William meant by exhorting him to virtue is made more evident by Erasmus' answer to William's next letter. Among other things it says:

What do you mean, William, by the words, "You know the kind of a life you are leading there [in Paris] and so do I"? Wretched me! How I fear lest you imagine that I am lazy, or feasting and carousing here! Deem Erasmus not foolish, William, but most miserable: think of him whom you were wont to consider inflexible, as now entirely broken and exhausted. Beware how you measure me by our former relations, or by your present happy position. I gossiped with you a little too frequently as between intimates a short time ago at Gouda, but such freeness of talk you should attribute to the wine which, as you know, we were often urged to drink, or to zeal for my health: for in order thoroughly to restore my health, I had prudently relaxed a little my former severity of life.[10] Moreover, such is my state of mind that I am unwilling to play the fool, even if it were proper; and again, such is the condition of my affairs, that even if I were especially to desire it, such a thing would never do at all. You will be angry at this also, perhaps. "Are you in such very bad case?" you will say. "Are you in want? Have you not the widest liberty to do what you wish?" When talking to you face to face I am hardly able to explain my misfortunes, and I can scarcely hope to do so in this poor letter. The sufferings of Ulysses cannot be compared with mine. Too well I know the reality of this freedom of mine, and you too little. [A few lines further on he continues:] What I said to you concerning N. [Nicholas Werner], relying on your old-time taciturnity, I beg of you, by all you hold most sacred, not to mention even by a nod. For it will profit you nothing, but will furnish him a most just reason for being angry with me.

[9] Eras. Ep. 81.

[10] In the LeClerc edition this passage runs as follows in the original Latin: "Quod autem Goudae paulo liberius tecum pro nostra familiaritate garriebam, eam loquendi petulantiam vel vino, quo tum vt scis saepe maderi cogebamur vel valetudinis studio tribuere debebas." Merula varies this a trifle (and his edition of the letter is much earlier than that of LeClerc) by inserting "valetudini in studio," while the Hertzogenbosch MS. makes Erasmus acknowledge a fondness for drink by rendering it thus: "Eam loquendi petulantiam vel vino, quo tum vt scis assidue madebam vel valetudini tribuere debebas." It would seem from this that the editor of the Leyden edition, or some copyist, had tried to soften the repulsiveness of Erasmus' admission, made in a letter to an intimate friend and never intended for publication. See Karthon's discriminating article in *Het Boek* for April 15, 1916.

And then he quotes as Chilo's one of his own adages which in the edition he attributed to Bias: "So love as if you may sometime hate, and so hate as if you may sometime love."

> You tell me that many things are reported of me there that are not at all pleasant. Yet, William, I can prove my innocence as to what I do; but I cannot prove my innocence as to what men say I do. I fear more what you may come to think about me, you whom I value more, so help me God, than all the rest. But what does that letter of yours mean, where you seem to censure my mode of living? Do you wish then to know just how Erasmus lives here? It is right that you should know all my affairs. He lives—indeed, I hardly know whether he lives or not; but he certainly lives a most wretched life, overwhelmed with every kind of sorrow, assailed by every kind of plot, disappointed so often in assistance from his friends, thrown from the heights to the depths by so many misfortunes, yet he lives most innocently. I know you will hardly credit these statements, for you still think of the old Erasmus, and my freedom, and my little bit of splendor. But, if it were possible to speak to you face to face, nothing would be more easy than to persuade you of this. So, if you desire to form for yourself a real picture of Erasmus, paint him to yourself not as a coxcomb, nor a gourmand, nor a libertine, but as a most afflicted, most sorrowful man, hateful even to himself, to whom it is no pleasure to live, and to whom it is not permitted to die. Most wretched, too, not by his own fault, but by the iniquity of fate; yet wretched as he is, it matters not, he is still your most affectionate, most zealous, and most ardent friend. . . . If I am hated by everybody else, I am not surprised, for who would not rightly detest such a miserable man as I am? Yea more, I have occasion to fear that on account of my misfortunes your affection may change, that affection on which alone I have ever rested secure, to which I ever clung, and by which I believed myself to be reciprocally loved in return. Not in the common way, but in that former way of ours. If I feel that I am hateful to you, and hateful because I am wretched, why should I desire to live any longer? Oh, my dear William, my former, and would that I might say, my perpetual, solace, grief forces utterance almost with tears. If I had done violence to our friendship by some wicked and nefarious crime, you ought to have shed tears of pity for your most unhappy friend, instead of visiting on him a most just anger. Now you can harass him with reproaches, you can load him with abuse, whose love for you no mishaps, no changes, were able to lessen. As if indeed there were lacking those who are working hand and foot for my ruin; who with fire and sword seek my utter destruction. What was there so dear to me there [at Steyn], the forgetfulness of which has not crept on me amid these calamities? You have often beheld me acting the part of a madcap, and have laughed. You know that I speak from the heart. What have I ever loved more tenderly? Now it is marvelous

how cold I have become. All those vulgar desires have left me; you alone cling to my heart, and so cling, that my affection is not extinguished, but rather increased, by the cessation of our intimacy. And can you hate that ever devoted friend now he is wretched whom you could not hate when he was fortunate? . . . But let there be an end of grief. Dearest William, for I may not call you "most agreeable," I beg and entreat of you one thing, both by our former friendship and by my most disastrous fortune, that, if you cannot refrain from hating me, if you cannot pity me, at least spare me your reproaches, which only serve to wound me more cruelly; and what you would do for a vanquished enemy, grant that much to a friend who is undeserving. Guard your health the more diligently as mine is desperate. Commend me earnestly to your father, a most cultivated gentleman, to whom I am much indebted; and also to Father James, your table companion. Your Jasper is most highly esteemed by me, and I am ashamed to have received such a friendly man so carelessly. Farewell, my sweetest William.[11]

This letter, which is somewhat lachrymose in tone, had the effect of making William fear that his suspicions of Erasmus' mode of life were unfounded. But Erasmus felt it necessary to make assurance doubly sure in this vital matter, so he got his friend Andrelini to write to William a special letter, which was couched as follows:

Faustus the royal poet to William, Greeting:

When I consider, my William, how great is the learning of our Erasmus, and at the same time how free his life is from any kind of fault, I cannot but rejoice that your Order possesses such a man, whom not only yourselves, but all this University, is bound to love, esteem, revere, and marvel at. For what more excellent or more divine can be found than a man whose learning and character are alike brilliant and stainless; especially in times like these which are so ignorant, corrupt, and abominable, that the sensuality of Sardanapalus is imitated rather than the virtues and good qualities of Socrates. Now I do not wish you to ascribe this letter to any feeling of adulation, for I have always been opposed to anything bordering on ridiculous and artful flattery. I would not write this to you or anyone else, if Erasmus were not a person of whom—I say it with no little warmth—not only your Order but your country is unworthy. Farewell.[12]

But it would seem that William and the rest of the brethren saw through the artifice, and adverse comment ran high, if we may judge from a letter which Batt received from Erasmus at about this time, wherein he says, "Several of those Zoili that you know of hiss as usual; but I am in hopes that I shall soon be freed from these difficulties."[13]

Still, in spite of his promises to his superiors at Steyn and to the Bishop of Cambrai, his theological studies were neglected, either from the more attractive charms of a purely literary life, or from the desire

[11] Eras. Ep. 83. [12] *Ibid.*, 84. [13] *Ibid.*, 90.

to make more money to meet his increasing expenses. To this latter end he began to take pupils, and among them were Thomas Grey and Robert Fisher, both evidently young men of wealth and social position. Now, when we remember that he told Brother Nicholas Werner that he had refused to take those young Englishmen at any price as pupils, giving as his reason that he had not come to Paris to teach or to make money, but to study for a degree, and yet we find from his own testimony that he did take them, we cannot help suspecting a little bit of duplicity on his part. So, too, it is probable after all that he did accept the enticing offer of the wealthy ecclesiastic whom the king of England wanted to have made into a bishop, for we find that Erasmus wrote a declamation for such a person.[14]

We may assume that these matters came to the ears of the authorities at Steyn, as well as to those of the Bishop. That they were displeased Erasmus himself admits. Then came the more serious trouble involving his good name and reputation with that of one of his pupils named Thomas Grey. It seems that he had been engaged by Grey's guardian to enter their household and act as instructor to Grey, Robert Fisher (a relative of Bishop John Fisher), and himself. This guardian or governor is pictured to us as an unusual type of Scotchman—"Scotorum Scotissimus," Erasmus dubs him—who apparently held some official position at Paris on behalf of the English government. We have no means of knowing the precise nature of the charge that this old man made against Erasmus; but it must have been something which ill comported with the conduct and dignity of a young clergyman. It affected him deeply, for in a letter to Grey after their separation he attacks the guardian fiercely.

> As often as his memory comes into my mind I not only grow furious, but am more struck with amazement that so much poison, so much envy, so much treachery, so much perfidiousness, and so much impiety, could dwell in a human heart. When I think of the villainous soul of that rascal—so help me God!—it seems to me that the poets, apt and eloquent as they are in describing men's natures, have either never seen venom of such a kind, or have been unequal to the task of properly portraying it. . . .
>
> You asked me not to grieve. Indeed, my Thomas, when I think how horrible it is, I consider that I am bearing it very well. . . . It is not enough for him to vent his fury against me face to face, and drive me to distraction in his rage; but now that I have fled he persecutes me with poison from afar, and out of hatred for me, rages against you, the dearest part of my soul. And he vents his rage, alas, with that weapon which among mortals is most terrible: slander.[15]

Erasmus is at his best in this kind of writing, and his powers of

[14] Allen has noticed the same suggestive circumstance, and has quoted the title of the declamation from the LeClerc edition of the works. (See Eras. Ep. 48, note 5.)

[15] Eras. Ep. 58.

invective were very generally and rightly feared at every period of his long life. It will be instructive to see a specimen of his ability to caricature and ridicule an opponent, and this old man furnishes a choice example.

> If you look closely into his savage face and mark his whole figure, do you not feel that you are beholding the image of all the vices? And here we must praise the prudence of Nature in putting such a deformed soul in a body entirely worthy of it! Beneath the shaggy forest of his eyebrows lurk his deepset eyes with their ever savage glare. A clifflike forehead, with no sign of a modest blush in the cheeks. His nostrils, filled with bushy bristles, expose to view a polypus. Flabby jowls, livid lips, a jerky voice without control, from some nervous defect, so that you would swear that he was barking when he speaks; and with all this a crooked neck and bowlegs. There is nothing about him that Nature has not branded with some stigma. Thus do we brand criminals and malefactors; thus do we attach a bell to dogs that bite; and thus do we bind the horns of the vicious ox with the warning bundle of hay.

And then he goes on for many pages to bewail the hard lot of young Grey, who is so circumstanced that he cannot break away from the guardianship of this man.

> And you, my Thomas, who have so noble a mind, so modest and gentle a character, so happy a disposition, must you obey savage brutes? . . . The best of men, you have fallen into the hands of the worst; the brightest of youths, into the power of a stupid old man; the most generous, into the clutches of the most hateful; the kindest, into the fangs of the most vicious; and according to the old proverb, "you hold the wolf by the ears." Oh, wicked fates! Oh, hostile stars! Oh, unpropitious divinities of the heavens![16]

And so on, until not a shred of anything human is left of the unfortunate old man. And in a letter which he wrote for another of his pupils—Henry Northoff to his brother Christian Northoff—Erasmus continues the excoriation:

> For myself I would behold any fury rather than this monster. However, that I may depict him for you in a few words, compress into one whole whatever you remember to have seen that was detestable, horrible, monstrous, distorted, vile, in the bodies of all men, and you will have the very image of this old man. . . . There he used to sit, bald and wrinkled, with the saliva flowing down his shaggy beard, peering at his teacher with those beastly eyes and bushy eyebrows, head a-bobbing, livid lips, yellow teeth, while from that filthy mouth he breathed out an infernal stench. And what will surprise you the more, he used to say that he had the intention of taking Holy Orders. Does it not seem to you that the fable

[16] *Idem.*

that they tell about is being enacted, where the Devil, who was sick, wanted to become a monk?" [17]

It is fortunate for this Scotchman that his name has not reached our times coupled with this terrible tirade. Apparently he was a person of good character and standing, or he would not be found occupying the high positions of trust as a guardian of young noblemen and that of an English public official which Erasmus admits him to have held. Young men of frank and generous natures had always exercised a peculiar attraction on Erasmus. We have already had evidence of this when treating of his relations with Servatius and William Herman; and later on, when he met Thomas More, he was at once and just as warmly carried away with the latter's charming personality. It is possible that this guardian, in his zeal for the morals of his wards, may have attached an invidious meaning to some of the epithets with which Erasmus was wont to address his pupils. It probably sounded too ardent to his cold Scotch temperament to hear Erasmus address Grey as "my sweetest Thomas," and "part of my very soul," or any other of the many endearing phrases that he was accustomed to use when writing, and, presumably, when speaking, to his more youthful intimates. That they were entirely innocent and harmless is evidenced by the fact that he always retained Grey's affection and respect; for, many years afterwards, when Erasmus was old, Grey often visited him and even stayed as a guest in his ancient preceptor's home at Basle. All the previous biographers of Erasmus, when speaking of Grey, call him the son of the Marquis of Dorset. Intensive genealogical investigation, however, shows this to be a fallacy; and the present writer is inclined to agree with Allen in considering Grey an illustrious illegitimate, and, as such, particularly dear to Erasmus, whose birth was similarly blighted. That he was of noble birth is undoubted, for Erasmus intimates as much in several places, and particularly in one instance, where he tells him to "go on in the way you have begun, and illustrate the splendor of your birth by a brilliant education." [18]

But, although the Scotchman was probably mistaken in his estimate of Erasmus, it is not to be supposed that he passed those few but feverish years in Paris wholly unsullied. As a matter of fact, he confessed to Prior Servatius, many years afterwards, that he had been sunk in pleasures; but he adds, "I never became a slave to them." [19] It must be said in his behalf that he never laid claim to personal holiness, though he admired it in others like Colet and Vitrarius. Unfortunately for him, whatever lapses from virtue befell him while in Paris always came to the ears of busybodies who were eager enough to inform his superiors at Steyn, and, what was still worse, the Bishop of Cambrai. So the Bishop proceeded to investigate, and of this Erasmus gives us the details in a letter to Batt:

John Standonck, as you know, has recently returned, in company with a poverty-stricken schoolmaster from Mechlin. The worthy

[17] *Ibid.*, 61. [18] *Ibid.*, 63.

[19] "Voluptatibus etsi quondom fui inclinatus, nunquam seruiui." (*Ibid.*, 296.)

Bishop has given him the task of scenting out and investigating in his most sagacious way all the devious manners of my living here, which having ascertained, he is to send the result to the Bishop, who has promised to this tattler a magnificent reward. His lordship, who is most shamelessly capricious, says he is surprised at my assurance in daring to stay in Paris without his authorization. He is very foolish if he thinks so, and still more foolish if he has told that scholastic and his beggarly companion so. I surmise that his episcopal choler is aggravated, partly because he considers himself slighted, but more especially because he thinks that I have complained of him to his brother, or to others, by whom, perhaps, he is censured. But these things do not destroy my courage, and I am the more disposed to do some outrageous act in Paris which will burst his spleen entirely.[20]

But in spite of this show of bravado, and in spite of belittling what the Bishop had done for him, he missed acutely the financial aid which the kindly prelate had so long sent him. Standonck's report was fatal to his hopes, and no efforts of his own were able to restore him to his former footing with the Bishop. Standonck's narrative had completely alienated all his regard for his former protégé, and in spite of Erasmus' urgent calls for assistance he cut him off for good. Erasmus made one final appeal which is somewhat enlightening, so we give it here as a picture of the relations which had existed between them. It will also serve to clear the Bishop of the charge of stinginess which Erasmus had made against him. The letter is to James Anthonisz, the Bishop's vicar-general:

I beseech you to uphold my former good character with my most generous father and patron, the Bishop of Cambrai, so as to render me more acceptable to him, if his old regard for me still lives, or to restore me again to his favor, if that has grown cold. I call on Almighty God, who searches most deeply the recesses of the hearts of men, to witness for me that I love the Bishop no less ardently than I did in those first months when he embraced me with almost paternal affection, and I admired and loved him beyond measure.[21]

This he followed up by a personal interview with the prelate himself, in which he seems to have won no success; so, feeling that he might, perhaps, accomplish more by his facile pen than by word of mouth, he wrote the offended Bishop as follows:

May I incur the wrath of Almighty God, if fortune, generally very hostile to me, has ever inflicted on my soul a wound more cruel than that which you, my most gracious father, inflicted on me, when, at our recent meeting, you accused me of ingratitude; especially as I would rather be esteemed by you than by many thousands of other people, and especially, too, because I have ever been averse

[20] *Ibid.*, 135. [21] *Ibid.*, 153.

to this very vice, not only from design, but also from my natural disposition; and I have deemed nothing in the nature of things more shocking and detestable, or more worthy of public execration, than not to make some return for benefits received, at least by good will and a lively remembrance of those favors. But I have borne your rebuke in such a manner that I did not consider myself chastised as by an enemy, but chided rather as by a most loving father and physician. It remains that I beseech you, my protection and my sweet glory, by your tender and most gentle heart and by my own misfortunes, that, if I may have been at fault hitherto, yea, because I have been at fault, you will pardon it, and attribute it to my ignorance or inexperience. For of malice towards you I certainly am not conscious; but in this affair, as in many others, I realize my imprudence and ignorance. I call down on my head all sorts of misfortunes, if I have not always accepted your bounty as any honorable and grateful client ought to have done. I have had a sincere regard for you; I have looked up to you; I have venerated you; I have sung your praises; I have had you in mind constantly; and there has been no Mass said by me up to this very day during which I have not begged of Immortal God that He would repay you with manifold interest for what you have done for me, since only He is able to do it. What can I do more than this? If you cannot yet be induced to believe me, I ask you this favor, that you will believe and rest persuaded that I am of this mind and will continue to be until the end of my days. I am not able to command good fortune; but I promise that my regard for you shall yield place to that of none of your household. Let my fate rage against me as it may; it may render me more afflicted, but it never shall and never can make me ungrateful. If your gracious lordship considers that the bounty which you have hitherto bestowed on me must suffice, then I will consider it most abundant, noble Bishop, since I deserved nothing, and you have given me a great deal most kindly, and of your own free will. Nor am I so boorishly ungrateful that I shall regard it as something which my necessity made me accept, rather than as something which your lordship lavished on me without any deserving of mine. Finally, I beg you to reflect that Erasmus in the beginning was entrusted to your kindness, not as though he were a man of influence, not as though he were a man of wealth, nor a man of noble birth (for no one bestows such things upon himself), but simply as an ardent student. This desire still continues in him, but more ardent than ever. All this I dedicate and consecrate to you. And oh! three and four times blessed! if an opportunity shall ever be granted me of showing not only that I was not *un*grateful, but of proving that I was most actively grateful. If I shall seek to avoid any effort, any labor, any loss of sleep towards the accomplishing of this end, I will not refuse to be held up to the fiercest derision. Meanwhile I beg you to be kind to your Erasmus. If I do not obtain this, yet shall I not cease to love and venerate my patron, even though hostile to me; and, as for

those sycophants who have come between us, I shall invoke upon them the punishments which are due them.

I have been with my brethren in Holland for more than a month. It is their desire that I spend a year longer in my studies; for they deem it a shame on their own account that I should return having acquired no degree after so many years. Farewell, most kind and most illustrious Bishop.[22]

This letter was written to the Bishop in 1501, six years after Erasmus had come to Paris. If the Bishop's bounty had continued over the greater part of this period, as seems probable, he must have spent considerable sums of money on Erasmus; and the conclusion is unavoidable that he was neither stingy nor close-fisted. It is doubtful that the breach between them was ever healed, for shortly after the receipt of this letter, the Bishop accompanied Philip of Burgundy to Spain, where he stayed a year, and died immediately after his return in the following year: October 6, 1502. He seems to have been a man of great decision of character, of generous impulses, and of literary tastes. That he did not attain the rank of Cardinal was due, as we have before intimated, not to lack of money, but to enmity at the Roman court. Even Erasmus shows us this when he writes to Brother Nicholas Werner:

He [the Bishop] has gone to England on an embassy in behalf of the Prince. What the business is is kept quiet. The Bishop, as I surmise, in addition to the Prince's affair, is advancing his own interests, in the hope of obtaining the cardinalate through the aid of the English. He is greatly in favor with their king and especially esteemed by the English Cardinal [Cardinal John Morton], from whom he has recently received the present of a set of vestments, and who at the same time has commended him by letter to the Pope and the College of Cardinals.[23]

But the Bishop died without having realized his dearest ambition; and, after he had done so much for Erasmus, his name was handed down to posterity by the latter with an undeserved stigma attached to it, because he would not do more. There was a harsh and uncharitable strain in the character of Erasmus which is anything but admirable; and nothing will better illustrate this trait than the unfeeling remark which he made in a letter to William Herman in connection with the Bishop's obsequies: "I have celebrated the Bishop of Cambrai in three Latin epitaphs, and one in Greek. They sent me six florins only, so that even dead he was like himself." [24]

Now, since the Bishop was dead, and consequently had nothing to do with the six florins, the incident only serves to show us that Erasmus was not only ungrateful, but mercenary.

[22] *Ibid.*, 154. [23] *Ibid.*, 77. [24] *Ibid.*, 178.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE UNIVERSITY: RELATIONS WITH MOUNTJOY AND BATT

But, in our desire to do justice to the Bishop of Cambrai, we have somewhat anticipated the train of events, and must go back to Steyn, where Erasmus had been visiting his brethren and regaining his health. His studies at this period were evidently to be limited to theological subjects, or at least that is what he told his friends. "I am immersed in theology," he had written to the Bishop, "and following the advice of Jerome, I learn so that I may be able to teach." [1] A degree from a university would give him the privilege of teaching in public, and under university authority. Hence his oft repeated wish to obtain a degree, and the sharing of his hopes by those at Steyn, and by James Batt. Returning to Paris with this end in view, he again fell ill of what he calls his quartan fever; and when the illness was at its height and he felt himself in real danger of death, he made a vow to St. Genevieve that, if by her intercession he recovered, he would celebrate her praises in his writings. His life was spared, and he fulfilled his promise.

> I recovered [he writes to Brother Nicholas Werner] not by the care of a physician whom I called in, but by the assistance of the most noble St. Genevieve, whose bones are deposited in the monastery of the Canons Regular here, and are daily made illustrious by miracles: nothing could have been more worthy of her, or more beneficial to me. I fear that the rains here have flooded all the country round. For almost three months it has rained continuously. The Seine has burst its banks here and there and inundated the city. St. Genevieve's shrine, however, was carried to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Bishop and the whole University walking in solemn procession. The Canons Regular led the way, the Abbot himself and all his monks walking with bare feet, while four of them, with bodies bared, supported the shrine. Ever since we have had most lovely weather.[2]

[1] Eras. Ep. 51.

[2] *Ibid.*, 50. Pennington assumes that his praise of St. Genevieve was ironical. This is gratuitous and wholly without foundation, since the above letter was written to an old and saintly priest at the monastery of Steyn, where such irony would be very much out of place. In Paris in those days, it was customary to call on St. Genevieve, the patroness of the city, for her help in times of stress and affliction; and for centuries afterwards her intercession was invoked in all extraordinary public calamities. Nor, despite the modern epigram, *"Paris comme Paris n'a point de religion,"* was it too surprising to note, during the floods of the Seine a few years ago, a considerable amount of praying, private and public, to the same St. Genevieve, by the "irreligious Parisians."

He now devoted himself almost exclusively to the study of Greek, and much of the money that he obtained from all sources, including that received from private tutoring, was expended in buying copies of the ancient Greek classics. As he very succinctly puts it, "I have devoted my whole energy to Greek literature, and, as fast as I shall receive money, I shall first buy Greek authors, and afterwards clothes." [3] In furtherance of this object he attended those classes of the University in which Greek was taught, and he sought the acquaintance of all scholars who were versed in that tongue. This brought him into contact with the literary men of Paris, with whom he made friends, and gave and received mutual instruction. Though he did not always retain his friends, he made friendships very easily, as he once told John Mauburn.[4] There was in those days, as in every age, a real bohemianism among the members of the literary craft, and good fellowship and good cheer were component parts of their daily life. One of the very jovial members of the coterie was Andrelini, whom Erasmus called "his old boon companion." [5] Andrelini was born in 1462 at Forli, an interesting city of central Italy. He was educated at Bologna under Filelfo, and on April 20, 1483, received the poet's laurel at Rome for his *Liuia; seu, Libri amorum.* From 1484 to 1488 he was domestic poet to Louis Gonzaga, Bishop of Mantua, but he left this post in 1488 to go to Paris, where on September 5, 1489, he was admitted to lecture publicly at the University. Here he taught for twenty years, both in public and private. On one occasion Charles VIII, being pleased with Andrelini's *Conquest of Naples,* gave him a bag of gold so heavy that he could scarcely carry it home. He was held in high repute by his contemporaries; but though Erasmus praised him during his life he ridiculed his work after his death, saying that his Greek wanted νοῦς, and his Latin *mens.* Neither friend nor foe was safe from the biting wit of Erasmus, whenever he thought it safe to indulge it. Andrelini was the French poet laureate at his death in 1518.

Another of his friends, Robert Gaguin, we have already mentioned. We must now notice one who was destined to exert considerable influence on his career—William Blunt, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, who became one of his most devoted friends and benefactors. It was the custom of wealthy and noble Englishmen, after finishing in their own universities, to go over to Paris in order to take courses in the university there. A number of them had secured apartments for mutual study and instruction; and it was to be private tutor to some of them, especially to Mountjoy, that the services of Erasmus were obtained. This was a fortunate friendship for him, since through the kindness of Mountjoy he was presently invited to England, where he met all the scholars of note whom that country afforded. Mountjoy, in 1498, which year we are now treating, was a young man of nineteen, of rich talents and brilliant prospects. He was an energetic student and fitted himself

[3] *Ibid.,* 124, l. 62.
[4] "Eo tamen ingenio natus sum vt ad quaslibet amicitias conciliandas sim perfacilis." (Eras. Ep. 52.)
[5] "Vetus congerro meus."

thoroughly for the positions of honor and trust which were afterwards bestowed on him. One of these positions was the post of directing the studies of the young Prince Henry, afterwards Henry VIII. That King, as a consequence, was always much attached to Mountjoy; and it was through him that Erasmus and the King became acquainted. Mountjoy settled on Erasmus a pension of one hundred crowns, which was his principal source of income after the death of the Bishop of Cambrai. The work of Mountjoy as a student was much admired, and we have Crevier's authority for stating that his Latin compositions were read aloud as models before his classes in the University.[6] He evidently possessed a clear insight into the nature and purpose of men's actions, and readily made allowance for the petulance of character and irritability of temper of Erasmus, in view of his undoubtedly great attainments; and from this time on for many years he lost no opportunity to advance the interests of his learned though difficult friend.

The gathering together of these bright young men, with Erasmus in their midst, must have been both intellectual and joyous. As he could speak no English, and very little French at this time, their feasts of reason must have taken place in Latin; and we can readily see how Erasmus, with his fluent mastery of that tongue, easily took and held the lead in all the conversation, like Johnson at the Literary Club. We can figure him to ourselves, flanked on either side by Mountjoy and Grey, sallying forth at evening to encounter Andrelini in some gay resort where the wine was good and the creature comforts abundant. Then, when the blood was sufficiently warmed, what pleasure for the Englishmen to see the sparks fly, as the other two, with the rapiers of their wit, tested each other's metal! And it is possibly to the memory of some discomfitures on such occasions that we may attribute the very satiric remarks of Erasmus on this quondam adversary which we have quoted above. But their relations were more than amicable at the time of which we are treating; and there was doubtless a flow of animal spirits such as is wont to delight the souls of the young. "Youth was at the prow, and pleasure at the helm," at these meetings, and we may be sure that they laughed, drank, sang, and exchanged the latest news of the University, or mimicked the mannerisms of the popular professors, as young men in similar position are ever wont to do. There was a complete absence of the dignified terms that usually exist between teacher and pupil, as witness the following note from Erasmus to Mountjoy:

> Hail, Mount of Joy, as you truly are! I ought to ask your pardon, but I preferred to make an excuse. I admit my offense in cheating you of your lesson to-day, but it was necessity and not my good will that was to blame. I was compelled to load up two couriers with letters simultaneously. But beware that you do not change the status of the question by alleging that my excuse is a pretended one. For then the rôle of the defendant would become that of the

[6] *Hist. Univ. Paris,* Vol. IV, p. 441.

plaintiff, and there would be required a decision either judicial, conjectural, or explanatory, as to what is an excuse. See what a cunning lawyer I am; for I plead my own case before it comes to trial, and, being both defendant and judge, I declare myself not guilty before I am accused. I entreat you to look well after your health, and to make yourself beloved of the Muses.[7]

Little touches like this make us feel that he must have been a most delightful companion to those for whom he cared enough to put into play all the vast arsenal of his intellectual powers.

All this time he had been in close touch with his old friend James Batt, whom the reader will remember as the town clerk of Bergen, and consequently acquainted in some sort of way with the Bishop and his household. Batt, it seems, had made a great change for the better, and had left Bergen to become the tutor of the young Adolphus of Veere, grandson and heir of Anthony of Burgundy, then dwelling with his mother the Lady Anna of Borselen at the castle of Tournehem, about midway between Calais and St. Omer. Batt, who was always on the watch for anything which might advance the interests of his friend and guiding star, Erasmus, had at once written informing him of his change of place and occupation, and particularly describing the Lady of Veere as a person who, if properly handled, might become a munificent patron of Erasmus, and thus furnish to the two friends the long desired opportunity of living and working together (for this was part of their plan, and Louvain the chosen *locus operandi*).[8] Instantly Erasmus was all eagerness for the matter to be tested and the Lady's disposition in the affair to be ascertained. He was thoroughly weary of the struggle to maintain appearances in Paris, as he desired them to be, on the scanty and uncertain means at his disposal, and readily welcomed any opportunity that might change this state of anxiety to one of security and freedom. So he wrote to Batt as follows:

My dearest Batt. I am well aware how disappointed you must have been that I did not fly at once to you, especially as things have turned out more favorably than either of us dared to expect. But when you learn my intentions you will cease to wonder, and will perceive that I have consulted your best interests as well as my own. I can scarcely tell you how much pleasure your letter gave me, and already I am picturing to myself the intense pleasure we shall have in living together. How freely shall we swap jests, and on what intimate terms shall we dwell with our Muses! Already I yearn to fly away from this odious slavery. "Why then do you delay?" you will say. I have not done this without good reason, as you will see. I did not expect your summons so quickly. There is owing to me here some little money, if I may call any sum little. There are a few engagements of mine with certain people, which I could not leave unfulfilled without loss. I have a month's contract with Lord Mountjoy. I have just paid my room-rent in advance.

[7] Eras. Ep. 79. [8] *Ibid.*, 75.

. . . So you see that I cannot well leave these matters without losing considerable. And, if I left them undone, thus hurriedly, I cannot see how this loss can be avoided. . . . So you see that I must not neglect them. Moreover, and what especially influences me, if I should so suddenly tear myself away, those notes which I have collected for the *De conscribendis epistolis* would be all lost, because they are almost all in one Augustine's hands. . . .

You need no admonition, dear Batt, to look out both for my interests and for my dignity, for I am well aware of your good will and diligence. I shrink from the thoughts of court life, and I know not how bad my luck may be. I am glad that the Lady is so well disposed towards me. . . . I would prefer a fixed sum to be mentioned in your letter rather than a very large one. I will not remind you of Vergil's line,

varium et mutabile semper
Fœmina.

. . . The sum of my fortunes is placed in you. But if (which omen may great Jove forfend) the thing should turn out other than either of us wishes, what could you do to assist your little friend when, contrary to your usual luck, you are bound down with debt? I will not concede that you long to see me more than I long to see you. . . . I write thus, not that I have either changed my mind or that I am wavering, but that I may awake your vigilance. For our interests are mutual. . . . You have sent me a sorry hired nag and expenses for the journey that really are as good as nothing. When will there be a more dignified or honorable opportunity for you to ask a favor for me than now, when I am to be summoned away from this city and from such auspicious circumstances? With such a pitiful sum I could barely make the journey on foot; how can I accomplish it on horseback with two servants? If the affair is to be paid for by the Lady's money, as I suppose, I like not this beginning; but if at your expense, I like it less still, for it is not only insufficient in amount but also borrowed money. What is more unlike a man such as you have described me to be than to come flying at her first beckoning, especially under such conditions? Who would not suspect me in such case to be either a simpleton, a cheat, or a very pauper? Who would not despise me? . . . I am but warning you to uphold my dignity diligently . . . I cannot come at my own expense, since I am all but penniless; and it is not to be expected that I should leave my present profitable enough position. . . . I ask no splendid Bucephalus, but only such as one need not be ashamed to mount; and you see that I need two horses; for I am resolved to bring my servant along, and I want this second horse for him. You will easily persuade the Lady to all this, for you have an excellent plea; and I know that you are skilful enough to make good cases out of bad ones. If she hesitates to do this, how, I ask you, will she ever give me a pension when she refuses me traveling expenses? . . . I have told you how to uphold my dignity, and all

that rests with you is to urge my case on as quickly as you can. I will not be asleep here; do you be vigilant there.[9]

Thus vigorously urged, the faithful Batt was obliged to make further efforts to satisfy the exacting demands of Erasmus, who was evidently determined to make a good appearance before the Marchioness, or not to go at all. She was very wealthy, and was undoubtedly an accomplished and generous woman; and at Batt's request and representation of the state of things, she added to her kind invitation to visit her at the castle, abundant funds, so that our precise friend could come to her in all the comfort that he felt his dignity demanded. But in spite of all his efforts to travel luxuriously the journey was a very trying one, as he had to make it in the winter season of 1498-1499. He writes to Mountjoy, on his arrival. a rather whimsical account of his trials and tribulations on the trip, and a little of it is well worth quoting:

> I have at last arrived safe and sound, although the powers supernal and infernal seemed to be against me. What a frightful trip! . . . On the first night, after a long rain, a sudden and piercing frost had made the road very difficult; on top of this came a snow storm, then hail, then rain, which as soon as it touched earth or tree, straightway became solid ice. You could see nothing but ice, not smooth, but humpy and sharp. You could see the trees covered with ice so thickly that some of their tops lay on the ground; some had branches torn off, some had their trunks severed across the middle, and some lay uprooted. Some of the oldest inhabitants declared that they had never seen anything like it in their lives. At one time our horses had to go through great heaps of snow, at another time through briar bushes incrusted with ice, now through furrows that the frost had first hardened and then sharpened, now over drifts that were too soft to bear a horse, but rough enough to cut his hoofs. What do you imagine your friend Erasmus was thinking of meanwhile? The astonished rider sat on his astonished horse. As often as the latter erected his ears, my courage fell; whenever he fell down, my heart was in my mouth; now I was filled with fear thinking of the fate of Bellerophon, and now I cursed my own rashness in trusting myself and my learning to a dumb beast. But listen to something which you might believe to be borrowed from the veracious stories of Lucian, had it not happened to me when Batt himself was at hand. When the castle was well in sight, I found the whole landscape incrusted with ice, which, as I have said, had formed upon the snow. And such was the force of the wind that on that very day two persons, being overcome by it, perished. But the wind was blowing on my back; so I let myself glide down the hills, sailing over the surface of the ice, and moderating my speed from time to time with a pole which served me for a rudder, something new in navigation. I met or overtook scarcely any one, so dire and savage was the storm. I hardly saw the sun for four days; but

[9] *Ibid.*, 80.

I had this advantage in my misfortunes, that I had little to fear from robbers; yet I was in fear of them, as men with money on them must ever be.

You have the story of my journey, most noble and frank youth; and, though it was most distressing, what followed was most comforting. I arrived safely at the castle of the Marchioness Anna of Veere. What shall I say of the gentleness, the kindness, and the bounteousness of this lady? I know that the laudations of writers are looked upon with suspicion, especially by those who are initiated in the art; but you must believe me that in this matter I exaggerate nothing—nay, the reality surpasses my skill to depict. Never did nature produce a being more modest or prudent, kinder or more frank. Do you wish me to compress the matter in one sentence? She was just as kind to me without any deserving of mine as that old rascal was malicious in spite of his obligations to me.[10] Induced thereto by no effort of mine, she has simply loaded me with as many attentions as he loaded me with insults, after my good offices towards him. What shall I say of my dear Batt, than whom the world holds no sincerer or more loving heart? Now I have begun to hate those ingrates. Can I really have been a slave to such wretches for so long? Oh! that I should have known you so late, now that fortune has borne me away from you before our friendship had united us!

I have been writing these things to you just as I am about to set out for my own country; thence I will return immediately and seek again that dear Paris, and perhaps arrive there before this letter. As to our living together I can write nothing certain; however, we can settle that later. Be convinced of this, that no one lives who values you more than your friend Erasmus. Batt also, the partner of all my loves and hatreds, has the same regard for you as I myself. Take the best possible care of your health, my dear William.

From the Castle of Tournehem, February 4, 1499.[11]

The result of his visit to the Marchioness was most agreeable, but left much to be desired from a financial point of view. We gather from his letters to Batt that he had made a good impression on her and that she was disposed to help him, but to what extent was the problem that he had to solve. The correspondence at this point is interesting, as it shows us a new phase of Erasmus' character, namely, his ability to play the obsequious courtier. At their first meeting he appeared before the Marchioness as the learned, versatile, and accomplished savant and man of the world, equally at home in the ancient classics as in the more modern studies of logic, mathematics, dialectics, philosophy, and theology. His priestly character, coupled with his undoubted learning, gave him a large dignity in her eyes, but it was a rather difficult matter to ask the lady to assist him in his financial embarrassment

[10] It seems that he has not yet forgotten the Scotchman.
[11] Eras. Ep. 88.

without sacrificing his dignity in some measure. However, he flattered himself that he had not made a bad impression, and bade farewell to her and her son, the young Prince Adolphus, leaving the details to be managed by the earnest and self-sacrificing Batt. So from Antwerp, which he reached on his way back to Paris, he wrote as follows:

> Hail, dearest Batt, my strong protection! If the Lady of Veere, once your, now our common, patroness, is well, and all her affairs are prospering, it is as I would hope and trust. I would not if I dared, nor dare not if I would, commit to writing how eagerly I desire to know whether she has departed from there, whether she has taken away with her, her beloved children. Oh! happy man, beloved of heaven, if you have overcome those difficulties, and if you can enjoy without envy your felicity which to me seems supreme. The goodness of her Ladyship, to whom I doubt not all the heavenly powers are friendly and propitious, makes me confident that such will be the case. I feel towards her, as I am wont to feel towards you, that my regard and admiration are more ardent when I am far away. Heavens! what frankness, what affability in one of her rank, what gentleness amid so much injustice, what joyousness amid so much care. Then again what firmness of mind, what innocence of life, what goodness to literary men, what affability towards everyone! . . . I have no suggestions to make, for I acknowledge your assiduity in my affairs; and such is the kindness of her Ladyship towards me that it makes me blush to consider how much she has done for me, who have merited nothing from her. . . . I pray that her son, a youth of amiable character, and her daughter who looks so like them both, may enjoy the benefit of good health. Give my kindest regards to each member of the household. February 12, 1498-99.[18]

He must have been in a very uncertain frame of mind at about this period, for Lord Mountjoy had intimated a desire to have him as a companion on a projected visit to Italy. Now this was something which was very close to Erasmus' heart, for he had not yet quite recovered from his former sore disappointment. The visit to the Marchioness of Veere may have been intended solely in order to obtain money to defray the expenses of a trip to Italy, either with Lord Mountjoy or alone, if need be. But in either case the authorities at Steyn were to be informed, and possibly placated, too, on account of his leaving the University of Paris. He was still subject to them, and could make no radical departure from the plan of study that they and he had mutually arranged, without first acquainting them with the proposed change and the reason therefor. This was a thing which jarred terribly on Erasmus' irritable and rebellious nature, and was only borne and endured until he should feel himself strong enough to revolt and set them at defiance. For the present he had perforce to temporize. So it may be that he represented to them that by going to Italy he might obtain a degree at the University of Bologna, which University at that time enjoyed a

[18] *Ibid.*, 91.

reputation equal with that of the University of Paris. We have a letter from his friend William Herman to Servatius Rogerus which touches somewhat on these points. Among other things William writes:

> The letter which I received from you yesterday filled me with incredible pleasure. I rejoice and hold constant triumph that at length the learning and capacity of my friend Erasmus has been noted by fortune, whom while he has pursued over half the world, he has now at last hardly overtaken her. Our Erasmus has been here to see us, perhaps for the last time (which may the heavenly powers avert!) After Easter he is going to Bologna (how long! and what a journey!) and is already preparing for the trip. If all goes well, he will return with the degree and a triumph; but should any misfortune befall him it will cause us a lasting sorrow, especially to me whom he always made so much of, as you are aware.[13]

But his hopes of seeing Italy were again doomed to disappointment, for Mountjoy had changed his plans, as Erasmus informs Batt:

> I have decided to defer my Italian journey until August, if in the meantime I may be able to get together the wherewithal such a tour requires. Lord Mountjoy has decided to visit Italy, if his mother will permit it, but not until next year; nor has he said a word about taking me with him. I remember how magnificently I was deluded in my hopes of this thing before; and if I wait another year, when shall I see my dear Batt again? And you would hardly credit how my soul longs to fly back to your society. For which reason it seems best to me to hasten my journey as much as possible. . . . Strive, my dear Batt, that we may live together at Louvain as soon as ever we can. Achieve what you started out to do. I am ashamed to admit how much this loss irritates me. I see that large sum of money, which is now in great part lost, must again be gathered together; and some of it must be used for daily expenses. I have no expectation of help from any source except from you alone, my friend. But I have found by experience what you can accomplish when that lucky mind of yours is applied. You see what I want to accomplish; and I am not ashamed to load you with entreaties, you from whom I have already received so many favors. If you assist me, I will strive also; if not, let us follow wheresoever the fates summon us. There will be no lack of a brief for begging; as, for instance, that the journey had to be deferred on account of several unavoidable reasons, or that a book had to be put through the press in a better manner and at my expense. Let me know what hope or encouragement you have. Farewell. Paris, May 2, 1499.[14]

In a few days, instead of the good news that he so much desired, he learned from the letter of a friend that his beloved Batt was dangerously

[13] *Ibid.*, 92. [14] *Ibid.*, 95.

ill, and, as usual, he fell into the slough of despondency. But Batt did not die this time, and his period of convalescence gave him an opportunity to wonder whether he was not spending himself too much in the service of his literary but somewhat selfish friend. So he wrote to Erasmus a letter which was evidently a statement of unpalatable truths, and which the latter chose to regard as "contumelious." But Erasmus could not afford to quarrel with his best friend; so he answered with a somewhat jocose epistle, some of which we will quote:

> Have you so far recovered that you would kill me with an abusive letter? Already you were announced as being confined to your bed; then as awaiting the knife of the operating surgeon. Sadly and mournfully I was meditating an epitaph for you. But you, please God, having suddenly jumped up, challenge me to a scolding match, forsooth! Well, my dear Batt, I much prefer to wage war with you by the sharpest invectives, rather than to play the faithful friend in the office of writing your epitaph. Come then, let me get ready, since you were first to challenge me to combat. What desperate audacity! You worthless little manikin, do you dare to bandy words with a man so magnificently endowed with this world's goods as I am? Or if you despise my wealth, do you not fear the pen of Erasmus? You know the weapons with which poets war, and, if in anger I should turn these against you, it would be all over with you. In vain would your moats, your ramparts, your lofty walls surround you. So far I have only skirmished with my light infantry; but if you do not at once sue for peace I will engage you with my regular line.
>
> But, joking aside, I rejoice exceedingly, my dear Batt, that you have a chance to make merry again. For that lying letter of Adrian's discouraged me sadly, so that I was deliberating whether I ought to hasten back to see you. . . . Natalis the theological student gave me your kind regards, from whom I learned that the Lady of Veere had started on her journey to Rome, together with her sister, and had expressed a wish that I were with them. I would congratulate you that you are going to leave the castle for Louvain, if your new freedom did not make you so haughty. Very little hope of freedom you had when you were harassed by your protracted servitude; now see how proud you have become. What will you be when at Louvain you reign in all your glory? Let me know what you have in your mind, and what good luck you are having in my affairs.[15]

But Batt seems not to have been so easily placated this time, for he wrote to Erasmus again, speaking in such plain terms that the latter was forced to take refuge in generalities and mock heroics.

> See how valiant you are in reviling. Overthrown with one letter only, I surrender, I depart from the arena, I fly even to England; there surely I hope to be safe from your upbraidings. For if you

[15] *Ibid.*, 101.

mean to follow me, you will have to pass into another land; and I know your tendency to seasickness, for although you were born on the water there is nothing you hate worse than the sea. And, if your abusive letters follow me there, I hear that there are some islands called the Orkneys in farthest Britain. To these I will fly, or even to the antipodes which are still more remote. Go now, and swagger triumphantly about your glorious victory. Farewell. Paris, May, ⟨1499⟩.[16]

The unexpected had happened, and, instead of taking Erasmus to Italy, Mountjoy had carried him off to England, where his opening career received its first orientation, and where his ideas, principles, hopes, and aspirations were permanently modified.

[16] *Ibid.*, 102.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RENAISSANCE: INFLUENCE ON ERASMUS

We have now followed Erasmus through the plastic period of his life. He was a man of thirty-three years on arriving in England in the summer of 1499; and if we wish to understand him, and the influence he exerted on his times, it will be profitable to survey briefly the condition of the world into which he was about to make his entrance.

The Renaissance was in full swing in Italy and was slowly making itself felt throughout the length and breadth of Europe. The exact beginning of the Renaissance must ever remain for us an indeterminate moment, for it was the result of many factors operating for ages previous. The mental growth of humanity is a slow growth, and it may take centuries for even a partial culmination. Nor is this growth steady, but rather intermittent. It has an ebb and flow, a periodicity more or less constant, and is not fixed as to place any more than as to time. Persia, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and the Roman Empire: each nation had its renaissance, which appeared, extended, waxed, and waned in one; then vanished, to reappear, centuries later, in another. From the Augustan age, which was the zenith of the Roman renaissance, there was a steady decline, until its nadir was reached in the eleventh century.

It has been claimed that the Renaissance was a revolt against the barrenness and dogmatism of the Middle Ages, from a life regulated and confined on all sides by ecclesiastical tradition and intellectual tyranny to a life wherein the reason is entirely freed from all trammels whatsoever. This is a mistake, and such writers confound the Renaissance with the Reformation. They were entirely distinct, both in their origins and their results. Many factors must be admitted to have had influence in bringing about such a condition as the Renaissance: such as, for instance, long periods of peace, abundant wealth, knowledge obtained by travel and observation, a large leisure class; and the consequent cultivation of the mental powers which has always followed such conditions. In times of war and stress men's thoughts are on self-preservation; but in times of peace the nerves relax, the mind expands, and intellectual activities become more manifest. The breaking up of the Roman Empire, and the consequent unsettling of all things, made Europe for many centuries an armed camp, where force was the only law and power alone meant right. Nation feared nation, and every city was enclosed within ramparted walls. No sooner had the irruptions of the northern barbarians ceased than a greater and more subtle enemy appeared from the east. The Goth was succeeded by the Turk. So helpless and divided was Europe that the Saracens

possessed themselves of some of the fairest portions of the continent, and there was no single nation sufficiently powerful to stem the tide of their aggression. But there was one power remaining, not racial, not national, which alone could, if properly exerted, successfully cope with the infidel invader—the Church. All men in all the centuries since Christ, educated or ignorant, rich or poor, king or peasant, believed and acknowledged that the Church had guarded the deposit of faith entrusted to her by the great Founder. Hence when she spoke all men listened, and when she commanded all men obeyed. The few instances when they disobeyed only confirm the truth of this statement. So when she called on the nations to join in the Crusades against the victorious Turk, they ceased for the nonce to war on each other, and took upon themselves a worthier cause. If the Crusades failed, it was due to the weaknesses of human nature. But the Popes were ever vigilant in pointing out to them that the fight was for Christ against Mahomet, for the Cross against the Crescent. And we cannot say that they failed, even though the Turks finally took Constantinople and regained the Holy Land. Some lasting results were obtained through the intermingling of the nations. The East met the West, and they no longer looked on each other with the prejudice which is bred by ignorance. Each became acquainted with the other's ideas, and this was followed by the establishing of relations of commerce and amity and an extension of knowledge along many new channels. But, more important still, the Crusaders had been brought to know that there were other civilizations than their own, that the Greek and the Saracenic cultures were deeper, and, in some instances, more refined than their own; and, returning home to their own lands, they had, as a result, developed an ampler range of thought, a less prejudiced point of view, and a mental attitude that was receptive and even imitative of all the best of which their travels to the East had made them cognizant. This was the greatest factor of the Renaissance. It was not a revolt against any thing; it was a development, an evolution. Revolt implies swift action; but the Renaissance came in so slowly that no one can surely point out the exact time of its beginning. All the thinkers of any age are not always abreast; there are some ever in advance of the others. Nor do they always think alike in what they accept; but it is fortunate for the human race that progress results both from their differences and from their agreements.

Unquestionably the first fruit of the quickened intelligence of Europe which resulted from the Crusades was Petrarch. We cannot find that Dante was tinctured with Hellenism in the slightest degree. Although he apparently had a great admiration for Vergil, and took him for his guide, the whole *Commedia* has a theological rather than a classic trend. It was not the pagan writers of antiquity that gave color to his mighty genius, but the prophets of the Old Testament and the sublime figures of the Apocalypse. But with Petrarch it was different. Here was a man who used to relieve his nights of insomnia by annotating Vergil, an illuminated copy of which was ever open on his desk. His poems to Laura show that he had Ovid and Catullus at his fingers' ends, and

he died with one wish unfulfilled, namely, that he might be able to read Homer in the original Greek. But, while he had a classic mind, he had the soul of a troubadour, and the fervor of Provence added warmth to the colder strains of the ancient Muse. To him had come reports of the wonderful stores of learning lying hidden in the Greek tongue, and an overpowering desire to achieve that language even in his old age took possession of him. So he essayed the task, but made little progress, from lack of a suitable and willing teacher. He requested Boccaccio to undertake the translation of his favorite Homer into Latin, which Boccaccio attempted with the dubious aid of Leo Pilatus; but it was a case of the blind leading the blind, since Pilatus knew little Greek and no overabundance of Latin, so that when Boccaccio sent the finished translation to Petrarch, and the work went astray in transit, it was no great loss to the world.

But what Boccaccio had failed to find, Salutati, thirty years later, succeeded in discovering—a real teacher of Greek. This was the famous Manuel Chrysoloras, a man who was really able to render his native tongue into acceptable Latin. He was installed at Florence as professor of Greek language and literature; and the learned Salutati, even in his sixty-fifth year, was proud to sit at his feet and imbibe from him the mysteries of the Greek tongue. Bessarion and George of Trebizond followed Chrysoloras, and among their disciples may be counted Guarino of Verona (1371-1460) and Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459). Guarino was so ardent in the pursuit of the new learning that he made a journey to Constantinople expressly for the purpose of buying Greek manuscripts of the old classic authors.[1] He spent the latter fifty years of his life in teaching Greek and Latin at Ferrara, and died at the advanced age of eighty-nine. Poggio, after acting as Latin secretary for several Popes, finally devoted himself to the fascinating task of searching the monastic libraries of Germany, France, and Switzerland, for copies of the lost classics. Niccolo Niccoli, Francesco Barbaro, Guarino, and others, aided him with money and advice in making his acquisitions; and to him we owe the discovery of a perfect copy of Quintilian which he found in a cell of the monastery of St. Gall in Switzerland.

We owe to him also the bringing to light of several orations and treatises of Cicero, as well as a copy of the long lost Lucretius. He trained others to follow the same sort of activities, and one of his pupils, Nicholas of Trèves, found twelve of the missing comedies of Plautus. Each new discovery was hailed with joy by the learned of all countries, and caused such emulation that the fashionable occupation of Popes, Cardinals, and princes became the amassing of manuscripts and the collecting of vast libraries. Perhaps the greatest impulse that the New Learning received about this period was caused by the election to the papal chair of Thomas Parentucelli, who took the name of Nicholas V. Born in 1389, he succeeded to the chair of Peter in 1447, and from that time until his death in 1455 he exerted all his great

[1] This was in 1406, as W. C. Clark was recently so fortunate as to ascertain definitely.

wealth, influence, and authority, in founding a library that excelled in every way anything that the learned world had yet attempted. While yet a young priest he had served his apprenticeship in the service of Cosmo de'Medici, but very shortly his talents rendered him such a distinguished person that he was made Bishop of Bologna, and on the death of Eugenius IV was elected to the Papacy. He found the world at peace just at that moment and improved the opportunity to send scholars to scour Europe and Asia Minor for copies of the Greek and Latin classics, purchasing them when he could and, when this was impossible, making collations of the various texts and selecting therefrom the best, in order to add them to his collection. Though Martin V had brought back from Avignon to Rome a few books which served as a nucleus, the real founder of the Vatican Library was Nicholas V. The manuscripts alone that he assembled in his short pontificate of eight years amounted to five thousand, and the result has been that, in almost every instance, the Codex Vaticanus has been the ultimate authority in giving to the world the text of all the ancient classics. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and the consequent dispossessing of the Greeks, sent swarms of the latter hurrying to the Roman court, and to those of the other Italian principalities, where Greek learning was the only passport demanded. To these scholars Nicholas extended a hearty welcome, finding places for many of them about his own court and extending to them his munificent patronage and protection, so that he was the means of attracting to Rome all those of whatever race or creed who excelled in literature, art, or science. So much is the world indebted to Pope Nicholas V, who was equally eminent as Sovereign Pontiff and as scholar, that by many historians he is spoken of as the greatest of all the restorers of learning.

We can readily see that the spread of classical literature must of necessity introduce a similar taste for classical art, so we find the princely houses of the Medici, the Visconti, the Gonzagas of Mantua, and the Estes of Ferrara, together with the royal house of Aragon at Naples, all vying with the Popes in cultivating the sister arts of literature, painting, and sculpture. To mention only a tithe of what Lorenzo de'Medici accomplished in this direction would take up too much time and space; and we must content ourselves with simply stating that, under his beneficent rule, the arts and sciences were fostered, public libraries established, ancient statuary collected, and the works of modern sculptors extolled, so that Florence became the home of artists and scholars. As with Florence, so with the other Italian cities, and we need only mention the names of Filelfo, Poliziano, Boiardo, Sannazaro, and Valla in literature, Brunelleschi in architecture, Botticelli and Ghirlandaio in painting, and Verocchio, the teacher of Perugino, and Leonardo da Vinci, in sculpture.

In this necessarily hurried and meagre account of the Renaissance, we have still to mention the greatest factor of all in the spreading of the revived spirit of learning, viz., the invention of the printing press, which occurred about 1450-55.

It was the insistent demand of the new spirit of learning that gave

birth to the printing press. This newly awakened spirit was yearning to express to the world its hopes and aspirations, its devious wanderings in search of truth, its urgent need of learned help and assistance in presenting to society the treasures so long hidden in the monastic codices, which must be rescued ere they perish utterly. Suddenly an instrument of fabulous potentialities, of infinite possibilities, of priceless value, was given to it, and immediately the dumb spoke. Humanity, after so many centuries, had at length found a tongue, had at length begun to give utterance to its thoughts and aspirations, had at length become articulate. Hitherto man could influence the actions of his fellow-man only by the spoken word. Among the educated, it is true, there was some little use made of the essay, and, more often, of the diatribe, if the discussion happened on a mooted point of theology; but we can easily realize that the best of orators had of necessity only a limited and transitory audience, while for the written appeal there was a more limited circle of influence still. But now, in place of the costly and scarce manuscript, there were going to be books for all, and the work that in manuscript had been worth the price of a prince's ransom was now made so cheap by means of the printing press that the poorest of students might own it, and read it with comfort at his own fireside. It was a mighty engine, destined to spread evil as well as good; but no progress is evil itself, and all illumination of the human mind is from God. As the Renaissance was an intense curiosity to know and to learn, so the printing press was the answer to that inquiring spirit; and, as the history of the race in the past forms its judgment for the future, so the ideas which actuated the race in the past must influence the ideas of the times to come. Thus is formed public opinion, and now for the first time was an instrument brought into being by which public opinion could be created, moulded, and directed for purposes generally laudable, but occasionally unworthy.

This conscious desire to learn and to know sent out Da Gama to the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, and urged Columbus to find what lands lay beyond the farthest western islands; and their success led Magellan, Cabot, and a host of others to search every portion of the still unknown world for what might yet be brought to light.

But we must bring this slight sketch of the Renaissance to a close, realizing how inadequate it is to represent these Popes, kings, and princes, with their courts thronged with artists, scientists, discoverers, warriors, and statesmen, celebrating the finding of a torso of Apollo, or a statue of Venus Anadyomene, or coming to listen to the verses of the reigning poet. If the Renaissance had served for nothing but to display the spectacular, it would have accomplished very little that would have been permanent; but its effects were rendered lasting by reason of the rescuing of the forgotten literature of the ancients, the founding of universities and institutions dedicated to the development of the arts and sciences, and by the adapting of what was best in the former civilizations of Greece and Rome to the needs and necessities of modern life. And the final result of all this, if there can be any finality to what is a continued evolution which has gone on century after century, was that

men threw off the trammels from their intellect; that, guided by the experience which antiquity had bequeathed them, they began to reason out in a new way the problems which surrounded them. In a word, the world had reachieved initiative; man had found himself.

Now that we have hastily sketched the age, it seems to us proper to describe the man Erasmus, so far as he has made himself known to us through his letters up to this period of his life. And first as to the physical side of him, for we now know that physical health or the lack of that blessing will powerfully influence mental characteristics.

His heredity was as unfortunate as it could possibly be. His parents could not marry on account of the father's position in the Church. The mental anxiety that the mother must have undergone under these circumstances was necessarily extreme. Peter, the first child, did not apparently suffer much as a consequence of this prenatal tension; but when she gave birth to Erasmus three years later the long continued strain had done its work, for we recognize, in running over his physical history during his youth, that he had inherited the full effects of his mother's exhausted nerve forces. The loss of this beloved mother when he had barely reached the tender age of thirteen, followed almost immediately by that of his father, must have been a tremendous shock to his delicate nervous organization; and this was aggravated by a long and debilitating illness which lasted, according to his own account, for nearly a year. Then ensued the anxious period of indecision as to his monastic career, in which his mind was torn by conflicting emotions for some years. This increased the dominating force of his neurasthenic tendencies, the net result of which was to cause his nervous system to react violently to external agencies. His letters show us that he was emotional, irritable, prone to anger, selfish to a degree, exacting of others where his interests were involved, and caring little how much trouble or inconvenience he caused; a victim of insomnia, subject to frequent fits of depression, dyspeptic to the degree that the very thought of certain articles of food, such as fish, would make him ill (or at least so he thought). He was morbid, and lived in a state of intense apprehension and excessive emotionalism. His life in the monastery at Steyn was not such as to allay these feelings, but, on the contrary, to aggravate them greatly. He had not the slightest vocation for the monastic state, and yet he allowed himself to be made a monk. Or, if we wish to put it so, we may say that force of circumstances placed him there against his will. For this is not strange when we consider his bent and the very few avenues in life that were then open to a young man of his wishes and aspirations. That circumstances were too strong for him to lead a literary life outside of some religious order, and that for this reason he yielded his consent, is readily comprehensible. But that there was any real compulsion on the part of either monks or guardians from which he could not escape is not credible, for he was twenty-two years old when he took his final vows, and fully able to assert his rights if he had so desired. But it was an unfortunate consent that he finally gave, and it offers us a marked instance of the neurasthenic's lack of will

power, and the mental instability which causes him ever to hesitate what course to pursue. As soon as he had consented he saw immediately what he had gained—the chance to gratify his literary longings; but he also saw at once what he had lost—his freedom of action. He realized that henceforth he must subordinate himself to the needs and requirements of his Order; and he soon found, no doubt, that what he himself wished for, and what his Prior wanted him to do, were not always easily to be reconciled. Hence his soul was frequently in revolt against his brethren, for many reasons. For instance, according to the Rule of St. Augustine under which he was now living, the menial duties of the monastery had to be performed in turn by the brethren. We may readily assume that the rôle of buying in the supplies for the kitchen, or superintending the care of the sick brethren, or even assisting the Prior in his multifarious duties, might not appeal to Erasmus, if he were at that moment diligently engaged in comparing two codices of Plautus for the more correct reading of some intricate passage. And, if he hesitated in rendering a prompt obedience to his Superior's request, then he was subject to a merited rebuke for his infraction of the Rule. And this might easily happen, for in that age Erasmus frequently complains that there was little respect for learning amongst his countrymen. He mentions especially that when he was writing poetry in his youth, he was singing to the ears of asses; and comments on Dutch dullness frequently, as when he says in his *Colloquies,* "If the story lacks wit, remember that it is Dutch." [2] And this complaint is general and not alone directed against the monasteries. So it is not to be wondered at if his Superior at Steyn considered Plautus of small account in comparison with the daily and hourly needs of a large monastery, with its inmates of varying characters, all of whom were to be governed and directed efficiently and with the least friction possible. Then, too, the constant chanting of the Offices of the Church, which took up so much time, did not make its intended appeal to our young monk, but only kept him from his beloved studies. Like all neurasthenics he was exquisitely sensitive to praise and blame, avid of the former, but most intolerant of the latter. So, too, his letters show us that he was suspicious, often insincere, unreasonable in his demands on his friends, easily offended except where his interests might be imperiled thereby, impatient of control, contemptuous of men of little learning, and filled with pride of intellect. He had that extreme touchiness of authors which causes many of them to regard that man as an enemy who is not a frank admirer.[3] He thought that the world was against him, and was ever lamenting his bad luck. "There is always some evil genius who is upsetting my plans," he writes to Batt.[4] "I recognize how malignant fortune is in my regard," he says to him in another letter.[5] To John Falcon he writes, "My usual luck has followed me hitherto";[6] and again he complains to a medical friend, "You boast about Erasmus

[2] *Conuiuium fabulosum, in loco.*
[3] Eras. Ep. 90, l. 12.
[4] *Ibid.*, 129, l. 2.
[5] *Ibid.*, 80, l. 67.
[6] *Ibid.*, 87, l. 5.

and his wealth, but who will believe you when you speak about me, a poet and a man who is fatally unlucky?" [7] And writing to the Bishop of Cambrai, he exclaims, "My luck rages against me savagely." [8]

He inveighed against fate in general and his surroundings in particular. He was no Spartan, for when he was hurt he cried out lustily. He nursed no silent grief, but always made his sorrows vocal, that he might enjoy the luxury of sympathy. The monk's frock, the endless succession of choir duties, the mechanical recurrence of the daily avocations, the monotonous routine of rising and retiring, of prayer and recreation, the unwelcome summons to tasks that were distasteful to him; all these things were a torture to his sensitive soul, and filled him with bitterness and loathing. And when at last his Superiors, who must have admired his achievements secretly—difficult subject though he certainly must have been—set themselves in earnest to find some position for him outside of the monastery which might be in some degree commensurate with his abilities, it indicates to us that they were not entirely devoid of all sense of what was fit and proper for their young brother. So they gladly sent him to the Bishop of Cambrai, under whose gentle sway he passed several blissful months, with few duties to perform, and these exactly of the sort that suited his personal tastes. He was freed from the monotonous routine which so galled his spirit, and the future seemed roseate, except for one little thing. The authorities at Steyn were still his superiors, to whom he owed strict obedience, and who could always compel his return to the monastery whenever they so desired. The fear of this was constantly on his mind; it poisoned the spring of his happiness and ate like a canker at his heart. His soul had never been able to expand at Steyn, possibly because he did not meet there the appreciation which he craved, but more probably because of the extreme sensitiveness of his nature. He may have interpreted what was mere indifference on the part of many of his fellow-monks as positive hostility; but of course we cannot prove this. But we can draw from his own letters that some of them were proud of him at bottom, and looked forward to his attaining the doctorate in Theology as an honor to the monastery, and possibly to the Order. For this purpose they were willing that he should go to the University of Paris, after the Bishop's hopes of a Cardinal's hat had vanished. Now it is here observable from a close reading of his letters that he was in no hurry to win his degree of D.T.S., and the only explanation that presents itself is that he felt that this would put an end to his freedom, that he must then return to his brethren. The bird was now out of the cage, and fully resolved, no doubt, never to go back to it without a struggle. Besides, he wanted to see glorious Italy, where the New Learning was dazzling men's minds and drawing to it the scholars of the whole world. So he had put off the taking of the degree from time to time, until at last the authorities at Steyn had fixed one more year as the definite period which would be granted him to accomplish that end. He informs us of that fact in his letter to the Bishop of Cambrai, written in 1501, after he had spent seven years in Paris. He says:

[7] *Ibid.*, 76, l. 8. [8] *Ibid.*, 154, l. 26.

"I have been with my brethren in Holland for more than a month. It has pleased them that I should devote another year to my studies, for they would deem it a shameful thing for themselves if I were to return to them without having won any honors at all after so many years." [9]

So now the limits were set for him, after which he would be obliged to return to the monastery. To him this was a dreadful prospect, after his seven years of freedom from its discipline—and those seven years spent in gay, lively, learned, volatile Paris. We can see in his correspondence of this period his constant sense of fear, his apprehension of impending disaster unless something should intervene to ward it off. And there was nothing to ward it off, unless he could sway them to the belief that he was in the way of becoming a literary celebrity, and that this could only be achieved by remaining in close touch with the other literary men who were his friends; that only by being excused from the monastery could he write and print books which would instruct and edify the multitude, that only thus could he enrich and ripen his knowledge, by being able to travel in search of ancient classical and sacred codices, as the Italians had done, and were still doing; and that all this would redound to the glory of the monastery and the whole Order. He filled his letters to them with the names of the great men whom he had met and whose friendship he was cultivating, insinuating this, we must assume, as an advantage that could not be obtained were he in the monastery. And so skillfully did he argue his case, so shrewdly did he take advantage of every adventitious circumstance, so cleverly did he make it appear that he was entirely at their direction and disposed to do whatsoever they would with him, while at the same time he stood resolved in his own mind never to return, that (as the sequel will show) they were never again able to make him come back to them. But in these early days of which we are treating he was submissive and deferential in the highest degree, and exerted every effort to keep himself in their good graces. The struggle to do so was an exhausting and long-continued one, and must have caused him at times to groan aloud when he reflected how impotent he was to resist them if they should really desire to assert their authority for his immediate return.

We may easily perceive, therefore, why he hated his brethren so cordially, and deem it no cause for wonder that this fierce hatred was later manifested against monks in general.

[9] *Ibid.*, 154, l. 45.

CHAPTER IX

FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND: NEW FRIENDS

Of all his friends of that period Mountjoy was the one who most appreciated him. So true was this that, when he was summoned back to England to solemnize formally his marriage, he insisted that Erasmus should accompany him at his expense. It was purely a pleasure trip and was taken as such by Erasmus, who had, no doubt, a natural curiosity to see England, the home of his pupils. It is not necessary—nor do the facts warrant the assumption—that he came to England expressly to study Greek.[1] That he did pursue the study of Greek at Oxford is true; but if that had been his sole purpose he could have continued at the University of Paris, where the facilities were equally as good as those to be found in England, to say the least. The visit was a respite, a surcease from arduous and unremitting effort to acquire and maintain the reputation for scholarship which he was just beginning to win under circumstances and limitations that were repugnant to his nature. So little was he expecting to go to England at all that the invitation came to him as a surprise, as we learn from his letter to Robert Fisher, who was then in Italy, where Erasmus had so long desired to go:

> Dearest Robert. I was somewhat afraid to write much to you, not that I feared lest so great a separation of time and place had dimmed any of your affection for me, but because you are in that country where even the very walls are more learned and erudite than are our people; so that what they here consider wonderfully polished, elegant, and charming, there cannot but seem rude, cheap, and insipid. Therefore your England fully expects to find in you not only a most accomplished lawyer, but also one who can speak Latin and Greek with equal facility. You would already have seen me there too, had not my comrade Mountjoy carried me off to his dear England, when I was all ready for the other journey. But where would I not follow a youth so polite, so generous, and so amiable? I would follow him, so help me God, even to the nether regions. You used to praise him to me both magnificently and graphically; but believe me, he every day surpasses both your praise and my anticipation.[2]

This was the great turning point in his life. The time was the early summer of 1499, and he had reached the mature age of thirty-three.

[1] Seebohm and many others have accepted Gibbon's assertion, for which he had not the slightest authority, that Erasmus came to England to learn Greek. (See *Oxford Reformers*, p. 95.)

[2] Eras. Ep. 118.

Hitherto he had worked in a desultory way, without much definiteness of purpose except that of becoming a great scholar. But now he was thrown into contact with men who were his intellectual equals, who appeared to have fixed objects in life, and who were devoting their wealth, their rank, and their undoubted learning to the achieving of ends to which he had been hitherto a stranger. During this first English visit he met the most illustrious men of that country—Colet, More, Warham, Fisher, and many others—and made friendships which were continued till death. These men received him as a great scholar, generously and without envy, and left nothing undone to make him thoroughly at home in England, introducing him to the literati of both universities, and advancing his interests wherever it was possible. And, although he could not reciprocate in kind, he has paid the debt he owed them in some sort by leaving to posterity pen-portraits of those venerable men, which lacking, nothing that their English biographers have left us could ever take their place. The first one he speaks of was Thomas More, whom he encountered most probably at the town house of Sir William Say, the father of Lord Mountjoy's wife. More was twenty-two years old, and a young man of the greatest promise. On his arrival in England Erasmus had been felicitated by personal letters from Colet and others, and among these latter it is possible that More was also one to extend a worthy English welcome to the illustrious stranger, whose literary attainments had won for him a reputation which was beginning to be known on the English side of the Channel. There is an interesting story told of their meeting, which is probably apocryphal, yet worth the relation.

Cresacre More, great-grandson of Sir Thomas, tells the story as follows:

> It is reported how that he, who conducted him in his passage, procured that Sir Thomas More and he [Erasmus] should first meet together in London, at the Lord Mayor's table, neither of them knowing each other. And in the dinner-time, they chanced to fall into argument, Erasmus still endeavoring to defend the worser part; but he was so sharply set upon and opposed by Sir Thomas More, that perceiving that he was now to argue with a readier wit than ever he had before met withal, he broke forth into these words, not without some choler, "Aut tu es Morus aut nullus." Whereat Sir Thomas readily replied, "Aut tu es Erasmus aut diabolus," because at that time he was strangely disguised, and had sought to defend impious positions.[3]

The first and earliest point of affinity between these two great men was their mutual love of the Latin language and literature; and in his ability to converse in that tongue More was not much, if at all, inferior to Erasmus. Indeed, Erasmus was frank enough to express his admiration of More's attainments six years later in a letter to Richard Whitford, when he said:

[3] *Life of Sir Thomas More*, p. 92. London, 1828.

> I have begun to declaim in Latin, and this at the instigation of Thomas More, whose eloquence, as you know, is such that he could win over even an enemy; a man whom I hold so dear that, if he were to command me to dance and play ring-around-a-rosy, I should obey with pleasure. . . . Unless my extreme regard for him deceive me, I do not think that Nature ever fashioned a more resolute, ready, comprehensive, or acute character, or, in a word, one better endowed with good qualities of all kinds. Add to this conversational powers commensurate with his genius, wonderful gayety of manner, the greatest wit, but kindly withal, so that you could wish for nothing more in him that appertains to the finished advocate. . . . I strongly urge you to consider More's characteristics, so that you may be able to judge whether there is any difference in style between him and myself, two who are so similar, you are wont to say, in thought, manners, disposition and love of study, that you deny any twins could be found more alike.[4]

Undoubtedly Sir Thomas More was born to be great, when at this early age he had merited such high praise from Erasmus. John Colet, too, much about the same time, had set him down as the "unique genius" of England.

John Colet also was an early acquaintance of Erasmus; but while the latter loved More his feeling for Colet was different, being rather esteem for his character, admiration for his attainments, and a sincere respect for his manly personality, which was in many ways such a marked contrast to his own. Colet was lecturing in Oxford on the Epistles of St. Paul when Erasmus arrived. Our learned stranger, being an Augustinian canon, naturally went to the house of his Order in Oxford, called St. Mary's College, at that time presided over by Prior Richard Charnock. Here he received the attentions which were due him both as an Augustinian and an illustrious scholar; and, in addition, Charnock, who was quick to recognize the mental calibre of his guest, so lauded him to Colet that the latter wrote him the following letter of welcome to Oxford:

> My friend Brumus in his letter to me commends you highly, Erasmus. Moreover, your reputation, and the testimony of your writings, had some time ago elevated you in my estimation. When I was in Paris, Erasmus was frequently on the tongues of the learned. A certain letter of yours, written to Gaguin and read by me, in which you were expressing your admiration of his skill and ability in writing his *History of France,* served me as sample and savor, so to speak, of the scholarship and wide general knowledge of an accomplished man. But the strongest commendation which you have for me is that the venerable father who is the Prior of the monastery and church of Jesus Christ where you are now staying, yesterday declared you to be, in his opinion, a man of the greatest integrity, and endowed with remarkable good qualities.

[4] Eras. Ep. 191.

Wherefore as far as your learning and knowledge and frank good will towards me—a man who rather craves and desires such qualities for himself than makes a profession of them—can possibly recommend you, to that full extent are you, Erasmus, and ever ought you to be, most highly commended to me, by right of those noble qualities. When I shall see you, I will do for myself personally what others have done for you in your absence: that is, I will commend myself to both the man and the scholar, as others have done for me, though undeservedly. For the inferior ought to be presented to the superior, and the less cultured to the one that is more highly accomplished. But, if there is anything within my humble sphere in which I can be at all of use or pleasure to you, it shall be as promptly and freely at your service as your preeminence could wish or demand. I rejoice that you have come to England; and I trust that our England may prove as agreeable to you as your learning can, I think, be useful to her. My feelings towards you are and ever will be such as are due to a man whose worth and learning I esteem so highly. Farewell. October, 1499.[5]

To this kindly, courteous, and dignified letter, Erasmus made answer as follows:

If I recognized anything at all in myself, dear Colet, worthy of even slight laudation, I would indeed rejoice, with Hector in the play of Naevius, to be praised by you the most praised of men, on whose judgment I set so high a value that your tacit approbation would be more pleasing to me by far than if the entire Roman Forum were acclaiming and applauding me, or a multitude of ignorant men as vast as the army of Xerxes admired me. For as, following the custom of Horace, I never sought the praise of the fickle crowd, which, forsooth, praises and blames with equal rashness; so I have ever considered it a most beautiful thing to be praised by excellent men, who are too sincere to praise any man falsely, and too prudent to be deceived in him; men whose learning admits no taint of error, and whose lives permit no suspicion of flattery. As to your praises of me, dear Colet, so far are they from puffing me up with pride that, on the contrary, I am much displeased with myself, being by nature somewhat fastidious. For I seem to be admonished to be such as I rightly ought to be, when I miss in myself those things which are ascribed to me, and which I revere so much in others.

For none knows better than I where the shoe pinches. Not that I find fault with the courtesy and kindness of those who so feelingly praised me to you; nor do I cavil at your goodness in crediting such commendations. For, just as it is natural for any refined man to feel kindly towards strangers, so is it also natural for any affable and agreeable person to listen to his friends. That you praise me on account of my writings I attribute to your wish to give me

[5] *Ibid.*, 106.

encouragement by means of a little kindly laudation; or else your remarkable modesty is such that the works of others please you beyond their deserts, and your own less than they merit. Wherefore, as well I ought, I freely accept, revere, and love you for your prompt, ready, and generous regard for me. I disapprove your judgment of me as more friendly than accurate; not that I consider you unable to judge such things fitly, for you are a man of singular prudence; nor that I think you are dissembling, since I well know the sincerity of your heart; but because, deceived by your regard for me, you lent too much credence to those who lauded me; and also, owing to your remarkable openness and gentleness, you take too much delight in hearing others praised. This mistake of yours, dear Colet, ought to endear you to me the more, because it proceeds from that heart, kind, ready, and generous, devoid of the slightest speck of envy, which has been ever a source of delectation to me. I prefer therefore that you should err concerning me on the side of affection rather than that you should be entirely undeceived with regard to me.

But, that you may not hereafter complain that unknown wares were obtruded on you by specious recommendations, and that selection may precede affection, lo, I will describe myself, and as much better as I know myself better than others do. Behold in me a man of slender, or rather, no fortune at all; averse to adulation, most ready for affection, endowed but scantily with learning, yet a most ardent admirer of it; a man who values highly real worth in others, having none of his own; who easily yields to anyone in knowledge, but to none in loyalty, sincere, open, and frank in disposition, without pretense or concealment, of timid but upright spirit, of few words; in short, one from whom you can look for nothing but good will. If you can esteem such a man, dear Colet, if you deem him worthy of your friendship, then consider Erasmus as much yours as anything you hold nearest and dearest.

This England of yours is most pleasing to me for many reasons, but especially for this, that it abounds in those things without which nothing delights me, namely, in men of the highest culture, amongst whom I count you unquestionably chief. For such is your learning that, even if you had not the recommendation of virtue, yet would you still be admired by all; and such is the sanctity of your life that, if you did not possess the recommendation of learning, yet would you be loved, respected, and venerated by all. How shall I now express how much, most noble Sir, I have been charmed and delighted by your placid, calm, and unaffected style, flowing from a most richly endowed mind as from a limpid fountain, so to speak; so sustained, uniform, open, sincere, and full of moderation; at no time rough, strained, or confused; so that I seem to have recognized even in your letter the reflection of your mind? You say what you mean, and you mean what you say. Your words, formed in the heart and not in the mouth, follow your wish naturally, not the wish the utterance. In short, with a happy facility

you pour out easily what another could hardly squeeze out with the greatest effort.

But I will refrain from praising you so pointedly, lest I blunt the edge of your good will towards me. I know how unwilling those are to be praised who alone merit the approbation of all. Farewell. Oxford, 1499.[6]

We may be able to form a very fair estimate of the two men by a close study of these two letters: Colet full of modesty, but with the confidence that comes from wealth, social position, and public estimation; Erasmus full of diffidence, from a lack of these advantages, but secure in the knowledge that he had within him the mental potentialities that were to make him the equal of any of the great ones of the earth. Each recognized in the other subjects for admiration; and this interchange of letters was the beginning of a friendship which lasted until Colet's untimely death, years afterwards, an event which Erasmus never ceased to deplore. And perhaps one of the most graceful acts of his whole career was his penning the beautiful sketch of the life and the works of his dead friend, to which sketch the English are indebted for a great part of their knowledge of the illustrious Dean of St. Paul's. Colet was of the same age as Erasmus, and had traveled in France and Italy, where he not unnaturally had felt the influence of the New Learning. His visit to Italy had happened at a fortunate time, when that country was the real home of art and literature, her universities full to overflowing with students from every part of Europe, her libraries rich in manuscripts of the ancient classical learning, now being rapidly secured for posterity in lasting type, the gift of the newly invented printing-press, her very soil yielding up its stores of antique sculpture to enrich her art galleries and museums, with Popes, princes, and potentates in eager competition to advance and aid this evolution of the human intellect.

But, while others dreamed of a new Academy where Platonic philosophy would take the place of the doctrine taught by the lowly Nazarene, Colet returned to England penetrated with the conviction that all this revival of ancient lore was but a transient effort of pedantry to seek an earthly paradise here, that ever-present desire for happiness which is inherent in the human heart. And he was thoroughly convinced that the only work worthy of any man was to serve his fellowman by lifting up his thoughts from all this temporal and ephemeral world to the eternal love of God. This was the concrete sum of what Colet brought back from Italy; nay, rather let us say that it was what he brought with him to Italy, and that nothing which he there saw was able to change that conviction, or blunt its ardor. It mattered not to him that an unworthy successor of St. Peter was then sitting on the papal throne. His spiritual and lofty mind was able to distinguish between the divine and eternal in the Church and the transient, frail, and sometimes ignoble portion which constitutes its human side; and it did not matter to Colet if a hundred Popes like Alexander VI had dis-

[6] *Ibid.*, 107.

honored the papal tiara, because he felt secure that God would continue to guide His Church, even by the instrumentality of unworthy sinners. Of the chosen twelve, was not Peter a coward and Judas a traitor? yet Christ established His Church with this weak and erring material.

Colet was a good Latin scholar but never studied Greek to any great extent. He probably read Marsilio Ficino's translation of Plato, which work is now said by good scholars to be merely a paraphrase, and to be neither good translation nor good philosophy. Plato appealed only slightly to him; and though he quoted from Ficino's *Theologia Platonica,* it was only to express his strong affirmation of a point of Christian doctrine. Not art, nor sculpture, nor any of the newer studies which the Renaissance was fostering in Italy, held his attention. His aim was to study in one or more of her universities, and Bologna was probably the one selected, as this university had a special reputation for law. It is evident that Colet's knowledge of canon law was wide and deep; and Erasmus testifies to the fact that Colet made special studies in that branch.[7]

But it was to the study of the Scriptures that he was most attracted; and theology and oratory were clearly among the lectures which he attended.[8] Throughout his travels it was the sacred and not the profane that appealed to him. He visited the more celebrated monasteries of Italy, where the piety of the inmates served to increase his own; and, if we may judge by what he said to Erasmus, he had long meditated whether or not to enter some religious Order, and there spend his life.[9] Returning from Italy through France, he stopped long enough to see what the University of Paris had to offer in the higher theological branches, but it is doubtful that he stayed there or in Orléans very long. Entirely untainted by the paganism of the Renaissance, he began to lecture in Oxford on the writings of St. Paul immediately on his return to England. Such was the fame of these lectures that all the Doctors of Theology and of Canon Law, and all the Abbots and other Church dignitaries then in residence attended them, and were accustomed to bring with them notebooks for the taking down of memoranda. He was made Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral by Henry VII, and there really began his life's work. This was to establish a school for boys; and so well did he execute his task that it has flourished ever since, and is still one of the leading educational institutions of England. He was truly filled with the apostolic spirit, and the accounts which have come to us of the simplicity of his life fill us with admiration for his learning and especially his goodness. He dedicated the large fortune which he had inherited from his father and others to the endowing and enriching of his school, and lived himself as the poorest of the servants of God.

No, the corruption and magnificence of the Roman court had not

[7] "In vtriusque iuris libris erat non indiligenter versatus." (Eras. Ep. 1211, l. 275.)

[8] *Ibid.*, 1211.

[9] "Nam ipsi in votis erat se prorus ab hoc mundo extricare, sicubi reperisset sodalitium vere coniuratum in vitam Euangelicam. Atque id negotii mihi delegarat Italiam adituro, narrans sese apud Italos comperisse quosdam monachos vere prudentes ac pios." (Eras. Ep. 1211, l. 449.)

spoiled him, nor could the lamentable excesses of a Sixtus IV or an Alexander VI stain his wonderful candor of soul; his permeating thought concerning them, no doubt, being identical with that of Muratori, who, when speaking of a former Pope, said that his account would have to be settled with God.[10] And it gives us the measure of the man when we learn that, above the preceptor's chair in his beloved school, he had placed an image of the Infant Jesus having the gesture of one teaching, which the boys on coming to school or departing therefrom were wont to greet with a hymn; and above this was the face of the Father, saying, "Hear ye Him." It was a beautiful thought emanating from a lofty soul; and when we consider that such a man was then, and ever remained, a close friend of Erasmus, we naturally feel our good opinion of Erasmus enhanced. We learn so much of Erasmus through Colet's letters to him, and so much of Colet through Erasmus' replies, that we shall have frequent occasion to comment on them as we proceed.

Erasmus made another friend about this time through the good offices of Prior Charnock: John Sixtin, for details of whose life we are indebted to Allen. He appears to have been born in Friesland or West Holland, but came to Oxford for purposes of study, and thenceforward made England his home. From 1502 to 1504 he was Registrar to the Bishop of Exeter, after whose death he went to Italy and won the degree of LL.D. at the University of Siena. He held many Church benefices in England, like other foreign ecclesiastics, and left money at his death in 1519 to found scholarships in both Oxford and Cambridge. Evidently he was very proud of his fellow-countryman Erasmus, and wrote him a poem in which he styles him "most illustrious of the poets of our age." With this poem he sent a short note, which is worth transcribing here as giving evidence of the rising fame of Erasmus:

> Our kindest of fathers, Prior Richard Charnock, showed me to-day some verses of yours of unusual metre and uncommon rhythm, which, in my judgment, would be worthy of no small praise even if they had been elaborately composed. When, however, they are said to have been written and thrown off by you on the spur of the moment, who is there who, having read your poems, will not place you among the greatest poets, the ancients, assuming that he has any taste? For they breathe a certain Attic charm and show forth the marvelous sweetness of your genius. Therefore, go on, Erasmus, and continue to cultivate your charming Muse, so that the world may learn from you and others like you, what hitherto has not been credited, that the German mind is not a whit inferior to the Italian. Farewell, most charming and agreeable poet.[11]

Erasmus' reply to this is so remarkable, showing as it does his eagerness for praise and his almost childish pride in his own creations, that we are tempted to imagine he was having a little joke at the superlatives

[10] "Di grossi conti avrá avuto questo pontefice nel tribunale di Dio." (Muratori. *Annal.* V, IX.)

[11] Eras. Ep. 112.

of his new friend. But we will give the letter and let each reader make his own decision on the matter:

Your frank honesty, Sixtin, prevents the slightest suspicion of flattery on your part, from which, apart from your character, the weighty testimony of Prior Richard or of John Colet would sufficiently free you, and your character would free you independently of the testimony of any man; for it is so clear from every blemish, so entirely averse to fiction and pretense, that in very truth simplicity could not be more simple nor freedom more free. Otherwise I might consider myself laughed at to be praised so highly by you for a thing so mediocre, I might say, so trifling and valueless. So help me God, I am ashamed to have those little verses—I have forgotten what they were—called a poem—nay, a learned poem—which were thrown off not only carelessly, but altogether without design while I was trying a new pen; and, if you had found fault with them, your censure for that very reason would have seemed to me most proper. For great writers do not consider trifles of this kind worthy of a scholion; and to be censured by you and others of like ability is in itself tolerable praise. So you really admire, Sixtin, those frivolous trifles of mine to the extent that what seems to me quite uncouth, to you savors of Attic charm, and what to me is suggestive of Scythian barbarism, to you smacks of marvelous sweetness. And on account of such trash you think I can be compared with the classic poets, may it please the Muses! Again I say, were it not Sixtin who said so, I might think I was being laughed at. For as Fabius says, what is this other than putting the buskins of Hercules on a pigmy, or making an eagle out of a midge?

But that I may not seem to fail in appreciating some of your praises, there is something Attic in my verses, Sixtin. They deal lightly and not to any great extent with the affections, and abstain entirely from those emotions which are called the passions. There is nothing tempestuous in them, no torrent overleaping its banks, and nothing of the terrific. With an unusual frugality of words they aim to remain within bounds rather than to exceed them, to hug the shore rather than to venture on to the depths. There is no deceptive purple about them at all, but their coloring, and I need not labor the point, is all native, real, and ordinary; and they so well hide all artifice that, even if you were Lynceus, you could not detect it. In this laudable effect I am a little superior even to the Greeks; for, while they so hide their artistry that they deceive others, I do it even to the deceiving of myself. They look to it that it shall not be obvious or apparent, though, if it be not felt by the listener or careless reader, it will be certainly perceived by the careful student or a rival author, when, as Horace says, he sweats and labors over it for a long time in vain. But if any man is so foolish as to read my verses, he will surely find that they contain only the slightest amount of artifice. This much Atticism I'll answer to. For as the Ennian [Neoptolemus] was willing to philosophize moderately, so I approve

of Atticizing indeed, but disapprove of too much of it. Theophrastus terrifies me with the scoff of the old woman who told him he spoke too much after the Attic fashion. I note this that I may avoid it, and will sprinkle the Scythianism of Anarcharsis with my Atticism. I do not follow the custom of Ennius of not singing of battle until he was mellow with wine, nor will I annoy the classic Muse. Soberly will I write sensible verses which will not smack of Apollo in any way. And I am so far from regretting this that I am even very glad of having this quality in common with Cicero, though we may have nothing else in common. And you must deem me to tell you this sincerely, Sixtin, for there is nothing to prevent me from telling the truth in joke. I have altogether fallen into a dry, feeble, bloodless, sapless kind of poetry, partly from poverty of genius, and partly from unfortunate imitation. Rightly does Cicero deem that nothing so changes a man's genius as locality. As a boy I wrote not for the Consentini but for the Dutch, that is, for very dull ears. I sang for the wealthy; and, in adapting myself too conscientiously to them, I eventually brought it about that I pleased neither them nor the learned. I tried to daub two walls out of one jar, to please in such a manner the common herd by simplicity of language that I should not displease the learned by elegance and acumen. Clever as this plan seemed to me, it was not successful, for I wrote too learnedly for the multitude, and too uneruditely for the initiated. Here you have, my most accomplished Sixtin, my own verdict on my poetry, wherein by how much I dissent from you, just so much do I appreciate your affectionate regard for me, so that, however much you have derogated from reality, just so much have you added to your love for me. And with good reason, for the less I recognize of the graces with which you endow me, the more I am compelled to perceive your deep regard for me. Hence it was delightful to have received praise from such a kindly man as yourself, and one so candid; whose praise if merited leaves me indebted to him for his testimony, and if false, leaves me beholden to him for his favor. For a man most assuredly receives a favor who is praised without cause: praise to one deserving it is a right, not a favor. Although I very much desire your laudation of me to be genuine, or to seem to be such, yet so much am I flattered by it that, fastidious as I am almost to a fault, I have nearly begun to satisfy myself because I am pleasing to you, that is, to Roscius, who would never have gained immortality had not someone found fault with him. And I endeavor to overcome my captious mind by reasoning. "Why is it," I say, "that you depreciate yourself, when to Sixtin you seem to amount to something? Because he admires you, either he must be deceiving you or he is himself mistaken. But that most candid of men is not deceiving you, that most learned of men is not mistaken, being as he is a person of most acute judgment. But he loves me, and those who love us are blind to our faults. Yes, he loves me, but that is because he knows me well. For what does Sixtin love in me except literature? If he knows me to

possess that, and loves me for it, he is not blind; otherwise it is not me he loves at all, if you take away from me that for which he loves me. So that, if he loves me not, and praises me falsely, he surely is making use of either flattery or derision; wherefore, if these vices are no more consonant with the character of Sixtin than slothfulness is with that of Hercules, then he has praised me no less truly than lovingly.

So I am a little severe even in flattering myself. Yet again it seems lacking in modesty to acknowledge such generous praise, nor yet may I refuse it; and, according to the old adage, I hold the wolf by the ears, and know not whether it were better to let go of him or hold him fast. If I accept it, it is more than I deserve; if I reject it, I am showing little regard for you. If I decline it, I detract from either your trust or your discretion; if I lay claim to it, I arrogate to myself more credit than I deserve. If I should accept it because it is awarded to me, I should be acting most audaciously, not only in the estimation of others, but also in my own. But if I reject it, I term either your wisdom or your discretion manifestly at fault, so that you will seem either to have understood me badly, or to have expressed insincerely what you felt about me. To such straits am I pushed that, if I shun Scylla, I must fall into Charybdis; that is to say, that I shall be a subject for laughter if I accept your praise, or insolent if I reject it.

Therefore, my dearest Sixtin, in my opinion, you should praise your friend Erasmus by indirection, as it were (for you are not unaware of the many cunning ways in which this may be done); or at least, praise him certainly to others. For when you praise me to myself you offer me something which is indeed delightful (for what is more desirable than to be praised by one whom everybody praises?), but yet it is something which I am unable to accept without a blush, or to reject without offending. You may make a god of me to others, if you like, without risking either of the above contingencies. For I am not, as a matter of fact, of that class of men who prefer to be measured by another's foot-rule rather than by their own; who never enter into themselves nor call to mind their own forgotten failings, but, depending on the approbation of others, swell with pride like peacocks at the adulation of their friends. Even if I were that sort of person, the praise that I never hear will not hurt me. And further, if they among whom you trumpet forth the praise of a very dear friend believe you, they must think somewhat the better of me; and if they do not yield their credence, there is no reason why they should think any the worse of me. On the other hand, so far as you are concerned, if you make them believe it, you will appear generous in that you envy not the good qualities of another; and if they do not believe you, yet will your politeness be approved for preferring to extol the assumed virtues of others rather than to censure their real defects. Here either way, as you see, is much profit, and no loss. But he who praises a friend to his face, even though he does it out of the abundance of his affection,

yet does him harm by his inopportune kindness. For either he seems to put his praise out at interest, as they are wont to do who praise that they may be praised, or to flatter him to his face, or at best, to indulge his affection. Whence it happens that he is set down as saying foolish things, or of a surety, things that are a little less than true. Then if the one who is praised remains silent he will seem willingly to accept praise that is not due him; but if he rejects it he will be set down as desiring to be praised more elaborately. If he returns like for like, they shout out the old saw, forsooth, "Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours!"

But while I am going on in this verbose way I am forgetting my Atticism. "And why did you say so much?" you will say. That you may understand, my Sixtin, that your praise, as I said, was very acceptable indeed; for whether I merit it, as I think I do not, I am delighted with the testimony of a most learned man, and if I do not merit it I am equally delighted with the kind regard of a most friendly man. But, lest I should furnish to the profane, who have no music in their souls, a pretext for calumniating the learned, let us strive with each other in this exchange of writing with all the energy we can put into it, using arguments of a similar nature to the above, so that, if in turning the pages of our books something new comes to attention of either, this we will share in common; or we will draw our swords on any subject worthy of literary controversy; or we will relieve the dreariness of our studies by witty and graceful stories; in a word, we will indulge in any sort of literary trifling you wish, provided that we abstain from the too pompous and the too commonplace style of writing. But hark you, Sixtin, lest you may take anything I have said amiss, praise me if you wish, nay, even revile me—anything rather than leave me in silence.

As for your bidding me to awaken my Muses again, it would require Mercury's wand to do that. Whether it is a lethargy or a sleep I know not; but whatever it is I judge it better that they remain sleeping, for they are inept, obstreperous, garrulous, and unmannerly. There is nothing more dangerous than to start Pan a-singing. When once he begins, he will plague you to death: "Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris, hirudo."

I did arouse them recently from a more than ten years' sleep, and they were very angry because I compelled them to sing the praises of the royal children. Unwillingly and half-asleep they recited some sort of soothing rhyme, of so soporific a nature that it would put anyone to sleep; and I was so displeased with it that I willingly suffered them to drowse off again.

But to make the world know that German intellects are in no way inferior to those of Italy, none, Sixtin, can do that better than you, whom Friesland, that prolific parent of illustrious geniuses—that Africa, I might say, which is ever producing some new marvel of this kind—seems to have brought forth for this purpose as a second Hannibal, that there might be someone who could con-

> tend with the Romans for the sovereignty of learning. You are completely equipped with the qualities from which we have everything to expect—an intellect that is ardent, lively, solid, and virile, a memory that is ample, prompt, and responsive, a mind that is deft and versatile on all occasions, an utterance that is sonorous and smooth, a character worthy of these accomplishments—so that you seem to be born for literature above all else. Add to this, that you are no recent tyro in such studies, as many are; but that, being educated in the very lap of the Muses, you imbibed a taste for pure literature with your mother's milk. And you are still of such an age that, if you were only now beginning your studies, it would be proper to expect nothing but the highest and best from that fervid intelligence, that felicitous memory, and that indefatigable industry. Now you have reached the point where you have left most men behind, and are second to very few. So gird yourself bravely, Sixtin, and show yourself a Hannibal in matching minds with the Italians, a Hercules in taming the monsters who, alas, beset good literature too much; and I will be your spectator and applauder. Your poem appeared to me to be just what you declared mine to be. It pleased Prior Charnock as much as one would feel sure it must from his great affection for you. Believe me, Sixtin, that you are the dearest of all my friends. Farewell. Oxford, October 28, 1499.[12]

This is a remarkable letter, and in many respects a very whimsical one. We may adduce it as a proof of our previous statement that Erasmus was very susceptible to praise and would accept it in large amounts. However, that has been a common weakness of authors from time immemorial and need not surprise us when we see it so manifest in Erasmus. It was a fortunate chance for him whenever he encountered an apt mind with whom he might correspond. In Sixtin he found a scholar, an admirer, and a fellow-countryman: a most desirable combination upon which to lavish the store of his learning. So, as we might expect, this epistle is full of classical allusion, logical argumentation, rhetorical adornment, and polished diction, of all of which he was a superb master. As illustrating the wonderfully retentive power of his memory, this epistle is a remarkable instance. Here he was in a strange country, out of the reach of his own library, so that we may assume that he penned this letter *currente calamo;* and yet one may recognize twenty correct references to classical authors in this single letter, besides many instances where he does not quote, but uses the classic phraseology to express his more modern ideas. Then, too, it is an admirable example of witty pleasantry, of friendly banter, of self-depreciation which he is far from meaning seriously, of proffered praise declined so faintly that the vacillating and hesitant Caesar refusing the crown comes into our mind involuntarily; although we are very like to balk when he intimates that he writes poetry in order to try out new pens, which is, forsooth, somewhat thick. Erasmus never feared to be inconsistent, and in this

[12] *Ibid.*, 113.

letter he gives us a ludicrous example of this, where he laments that the Dutch intellects are of the dullest, and, a few sentences afterwards, stoutly exhorts Sixtin to maintain at every hazard that the Dutch are not only equal to the Italians but even superior.[13]

That he had not yet discovered what was to be his life's work is evident from the tone of levity which pervades his correspondence with Sixtin. We see the graceful style, the polished phrase, and the learned allusion; but we miss the earnestness of purpose, the consciousness of an object to be attained, which was so soon to dominate him and to make itself manifest in his work. He was as yet the dilettante, loving literature for the pleasure it gave him and enjoying the friendship of those to whose company it earned him admission. He was a literary swordsman who liked to cross weapons with such worthy opponents as Sixtin, Colet, More, and others of the same calibre; and he lost no opportunity to test the edge of his blade. So, in the letter before us, he says to Sixtin, "We will draw our swords on any subject worthy of literary controversy," so full was he of the joy of life and the sheer desire to contend. The same spirit is very evident in a short letter which he sent to More; and it also shows how deep was the appreciation of each for the other at that early period of their acquaintance:

> I am hardly equal to the task of stating in writing to what dire furies I should devote the head of that messenger by whose carelessness or perfidy I deem myself to have been frustrated in my hopes of a letter from you, my dear More. For I ought not, nor will I, suspect that you have been remiss in your usual kindness, although in my last letter I expostulated with you somewhat vigorously. Nor do I fear that my recent freedom of speech has chagrined you, for you are well accustomed to the Spartan method of sharp fighting at close quarters. Joking aside, dearest Thomas, I beg that the anxiety I have felt on account of you and your too long delayed letter will be repaid by you with a little interest. I expect now not a letter, but a bundle of letters so huge that they would overwhelm even an Egyptian porter. If there be any lovers of good literature in your vicinity, it were a favor to urge them to write to me, so that I may make the circle of my friends quite complete, for I have not sufficient assurance to bother them by writing first. As for yourself, I deem it does not matter what terms I observe in writing to you, who are the most good-natured of men, but particularly so to me, I am sure. Farewell, my most charming More. Oxford, October 28, 1499.[14]

We learn from another letter which he wrote about this time to Lord Mountjoy, his munificent patron, that he was enjoying his English visit immensely, and that he was greatly gratified with the kind manner in which he had been treated by Colet and Prior Charnock. And he adds in closing:

[13] The Italians had been influenced by the Renaissance much earlier than other nations.

[14] Eras. Ep. 114.

> Send me my monies with all care, and under your own seal. I am in the Prior's debt in many ways, and indeed he is very kind and attentive to me. Therefore, since he has rendered me the service of a most kindly man, it is proper that I should in turn discharge the obligations of a most grateful man; and what he so willingly gave me, for that I should just as willingly recompense him. For as it is with elaborate furniture, so it is with good friends, I think—wear them out as little as possible.[15]

This paragraph tells us a few things about the status of Erasmus on this visit. Here he was staying in a monastery of his Order, under a Prior who was naturally his ecclesiastical superior. If he had come to St. Mary's as an Augustinian canon, with the proper and usual documents from his superiors at Steyn, he would have been entitled to free board and lodging at the cost of Prior Charnock. So, too, he would have been subject to the general Rule governing all monasteries of the Order in every country, including the chanting of the Offices in common, the obligation of rising at midnight, and the observance of the set fasts and abstinences. Now there is not the slightest evidence that he had sought for permission to make this holiday trip to England, or had applied at Steyn for the usual *Exeat* (or whatever the document is called that is sought for on such occasions). He left Paris in a hurry when Mountjoy said the word, and had only time to dispatch a short note to his faithful Batt, acquainting him of the trip. Had he been any ordinary and vagrant monk, Prior Charnock would undoubtedly have taken him in and soundly disciplined him, after which he would have made him perform the lowest offices in the community until word had been received from the monk's own monastery as to his further disposition. Erasmus was fully aware of all this, and the knowledge that he was contravening the rules of his Order and incurring its possible penalties, was not calculated to make him enthusiastic in his love for the monastic system, nor any the more friendly towards the authorities at Steyn, whose duty it would be in such case made and provided, to enforce whatever pains and penalties he might have incurred. Now, however, it was no common, vagrant monk who had applied for the hospitality of Prior Charnock, but a very remarkable member of their common Order, whose attainments in literature, painting, and the kindred arts had attracted the attention of scholars wherever he had appeared. He had come to Oxford under the auspices of the influential Lord Mountjoy, who was his pupil and friend; and such was the charm of his manner, the fascination of his discourse, and the attraction of his wit, that he made his way with ease into the select, learned, and cultured circles of England. So it was as an honored guest that he was so hospitably received and entertained by Prior Charnock; and it was not a question of how little, but of how much, could be done for the comfort of this brilliant young monk. It would seem that by this time his superiors at Steyn had definitely decided to give him a loose rein for the moment, probably observing the fact that he was beginning to make good his

[15] *Ibid.*, 115.

promise of winning name and fame both for himself and for his monastery. However that may be, we hear no complaints from Erasmus on this head, although all his letters to Steyn and the replies thereto are missing for this year and the next.

We must not omit another letter of his to his friend Sixtin, of whom mention has previously been made, because it gives us a lively picture of the way in which Erasmus spent his time on this English visit; while it will also serve to show us Colet as seen through the admiring eyes of his future biographer. Another reason for reproducing it here is the fact that Lupton and Seebohm have given us the merest sketch of this phase of their relations.

> How I wish that you had been present the other day, as I fully expected you would be, at our feast, for a feast it was and not a symposium.[16] To me surely never was there anything more agreeable, elegant, or lovely. Nothing was lacking. Cheerful fellows, as one would say, the time opportune, the place select, the table details sedulously attended to. The service was such as would delight Epicurus, the conversation such as would have charmed Pythagoras. And not only good fellows, but the very best, and of the sort that would do honor not only to a banquet, but even to a sitting of Plato's Academy. "Who were they?" you will ask. Listen, that you may regret the more your absence. First there was Prior Richard, the high priest of the Graces; then that theologian who preached a Latin sermon that day, a man as modest as he was erudite; then your friend Philip, a man of the gayest humor. At the head of the table sat Colet, the vindicator and assertor of the old theology. On his right was the Prior, a man, please God, a compound no less of every sort of literary taste than of the highest humanity and integrity. On the left sat that younger theologian, and on his left again I myself sat, that the banquet might not lack its poet. Opposite me sat Philip, so that we might have a lawyer with us. Below us were seated a mixed, and to me an unknown, gathering.
>
> The guests being thus disposed, immediately war broke out over the cups, but not on account of our cups, nor yet a war of drinkers. Although there was a variety of opinions on several matters, yet it was about the following that the battle was most strenuous. Colet said that from the very first Cain had offended God in this, that he lacked trust in the goodness of the Creator and, relying on his own efforts, had been the first man to till the soil, while Abel fed his sheep contentedly on what grew spontaneously from the earth. We opposed this view, each man speaking for himself, the theologian trying to disprove it with syllogisms, I with rhetoric. Now the Greeks have a saying that "not Hercules himself may prevail against two"; but he alone vanquished us all, for he seemed to rage with a certain sacred fury, and to comport himself in some way

[16] Allen's surmise that Colet had invited Erasmus, Charnock, Sixtin, and an unidentified lawyer named Philip to dine with him at Magdalen College is not without its basis of probability.

grander and more sublime than would a mere man. Changed were his eyes, his voice, his face, his glances, and he appeared to be magnified, inspired by some divine influence. At length, when the disputation gave promise of proceeding too far, and already had become somewhat more grave and serious than was suitable for a banquet, I took upon myself to perform my part, that of the poet, in order that I might put an end to the discussion and enliven the dinner with a more joyous topic. "There is a very old story," I said, "one to be looked for in the most ancient authors, and I will tell you the version I found of it if you will give me your word that you will not consider it a mere fable." When they had promised this, I went on:

"Once upon a time I happened on a very old manuscript, whose title and authorship the lapse of time had blotted out and the bookworms, ever hostile to letters, had eaten away. One page alone there was which had not been damaged by decay nor gnawed by worms and mice, due to the care of the Muses, no doubt, for they protect their own. Therein I remember reading the true story of this very thing which you are debating, or, if not the true story, then one most certainly like truth; which I will relate to you if you so desire." At their bidding me to go on, I began:

"This man Cain was just as industrious as he was greedy and covetous. He had often heard from his parents that in the garden whence they had been expelled the crops of corn grew spontaneously, with the finest ears, with the largest grains, with stalks so tall that they would equal our alder-trees; and that neither cockle, thorn, or thistle grew thereamong. After he had dwelt on this thing and observed how poor and small a crop he with difficulty received from this soil which he was then plowing, he added guile to industry. He approached the angel who guarded paradise, and, having overcome him by his cunning arts, he persuaded him by magnificent promises to give him secretly a few grains of corn from the riper stalks. He said that God was always careless and negligent about the matter, and that even if it were found out he would not be punished, since it was a matter of no moment, provided that yonder apples were untouched, concerning which alone God had threatened them.

" 'Come, do not be so careful a sentry. What if your excessive watchfulness be displeasing to Him? what if He desire to be deceived and will be more delighted by the skilful industry of men than by their slothful ease? Does this duty that is put upon you really please you? From an angel he made you an executioner, that you may drive us poor lost wretches cruelly away from our native soil. He has bound you to the gates with a sword, to do the work that we used to assign to our dogs. We indeed are very wretched, but you seem to me to be in worse case still. We, 'tis true, are shut out of paradise because we enjoyed a too sweet apple; but you that keep us out of here are deprived of both Heaven and Paradise, and you are more miserable than we in this, that we are free to

wander here and there wherever it is our pleasure to go. This world of ours, if you only knew it, has many things to console us for our exile—groves of the greenest foliage, a thousand kinds of trees, for which we have scarcely found names, rivulets flowing down here and there from the rocky passes, rivers lapping the mossy banks with their limpid waters, lofty mountains, shady valleys, mighty oceans. Nor do I doubt that in its most intimate recesses the earth conceals some treasures, and I will examine her every vein in order to wrest them from her, or, if time shall fail me, of a surety my descendants will. Here too we have golden apples, and the most luscious figs, with perennial fruits of every description. Many things grow everywhere spontaneously, so that we should not greatly miss that Paradise of yours, if we might live here forever. We are subject to disease, but human diligence will find a remedy for this. I have seen plants breathing forth wonderful qualities. What if we should find something to make us immortal? Yet I do not see what the knowledge of such things has to do with this matter. Why should I bother myself about things that do not interest me? However, even in this I will not be inactive, since there is nothing that constant effort will not overcome. So, instead of one garden, we have gained the whole wide world; but you, shut out from both, enjoying neither Paradise nor Heaven nor the earth, stationed forever at these gates, and forever brandishing your sword, what do you fight with other than the wind? Come now, if you are wise, look out for your own interests and ours too. Give us what you are able to bestow without doing any harm, and accept from us what we will make you a share of in return. You are wretched, help us who are also wretched; you are shut out, assist us who are also shut out; you are being even more punished than we, befriend us who are also being punished.'

"The worst of men may win the worst causes, provided that he is the best talker. The few grains stealthily obtained he buried in the earth, and they were returned to him with increase, which increase again committed to the bosom of the earth, and afterwards again and again gave him like increase. And as often as the summer returned he filled this now vast and spacious tract of tillage with this sowing. Now, when the matter had become so evident that it could be no longer concealed from the powers above, God, very much angered, said, 'Inasmuch as I perceive that his labor and sweat assist this thief, so will I mightily increase them unto him.' And at the word he assembles from all parts, and sends upon the crops, a close-packed swarm of ants, weevils, toads, caterpillars, mice, locusts, swine, crows, and other destructive things of this nature, to feed on the crops which were still in the ground, or just sprouting up, or already ripe, or gathered in the granary. There came a great storm of hail from heaven, and a whirlwind so strong that the tops of the dry stalks would have been snapped had they been as sturdy as oaks. The angel at the gates was transformed into a man, because he had yielded to man. When Cain desired to placate God

with burnt offerings, and the smoke refused to ascend, perceiving therein the sure wrath of God, he despaired."

That is the fable, Sixtin, told over our cups, and composed then and there over our cups, and so much the result of those cups, if you will, that I desired to write it out for you in full; firstly, lest I should not write at all, and I know it is my turn to write, since I had received letters from you lately; and, in the second place, because I did not wish you to be left wholly ignorant of so elegant a feast. Farewell. Oxford, November, 1499.[17]

[17] Eras. Ep. 116.

CHAPTER X

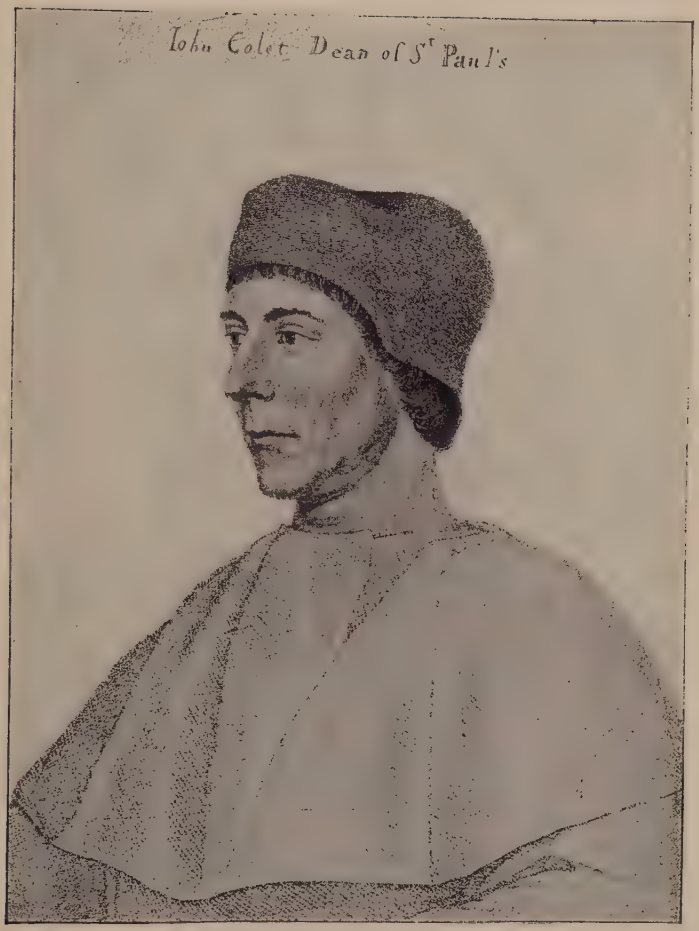
ENGLAND: COLET

Everything points to the fact that Erasmus was never meant by nature to be a profound theologian, and that he himself recognized it. We have previously indicated that he had rather neglected his theological studies in the University of Paris, possibly due to the fact that he was obliged by necessity to do the work of a tutor in order to make a living, but also just as possibly because theology did not appeal to him as much as did pure literature. In no other way can we explain his failure to win his doctor's degree there when in his letters to Steyn this seemed ever to be put forward as the end and object of his student life in Paris. It is true that he was versed in all the subtleties of the schools, and could prove or disprove a thesis, rhetorically or syllogistically, with most of them; but to him that sort of contention seemed inane and valueless. He had not the deep faith, the religious feeling, the fine ardor, or the stern asceticism of Colet; yet the possession of these very attributes by Colet, so different from his own, was what powerfully attracted Erasmus towards him. Colet, too, had completed his courses in scholastic theology, and was probably better versed therein than was Erasmus; and this was perhaps part of the secret reason why the Dutch scholar held Colet in such high esteem, as a man who understood the skilful use of the scholastic method better possibly than he himself did. He deemed Colet a worthy opponent in every argument, and one with whom it was an honor to cross swords in any disputation. We would like to give an account of another of these discussions which happened between them, because they show so well the difference between the two men and the qualities they possessed in common; but the mere transcription of the debate would take up too much of the reader's time, in addition to the fact that he might find a disputation on the real meaning of the Savior when he uttered those memorable words in the garden of Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me," too deeply theological to suit his taste. But, if one desires an example of the sort of subjects taken for debate in those days, he could hardly find in the entire range of theological knight-errantry a better one than this last, and one in which the opposing knights were of the ability and dexterity of Colet and Erasmus. The Dutch scholar could dazzle the Englishman by the brilliancy of his rhetoric and thus hide his lack of theological profundity; but Colet had in abundance what Erasmus lacked, namely, sincere convictions. Hence the latter was never successful in drawing Colet away from the principles and predilections of his matured mind. And to do Erasmus justice, we have no evidence that he ever tried to do so, for he himself testifies to the fact that Colet was "the vindicator and assertor of the ancient theology." [1]

[1] Eras. Ep. 116.

Let it suffice for the present to say that the more they exchanged ideas, sentiments, and opinions, the more each advanced in the other's estimation. It is a tribute to the attractive qualities of Erasmus' personality that the calm, cold, reserved Colet made him a direct offer to associate with him in the task which he had marked out for himself as his life's work. Since the reply of Erasmus to this noble invitation throws much further light on the characters of both, we will insert it here, regretting that Colet's letter to which this is the answer is not now to be found:

> As much as you unmeritedly praised me in your last letter, most learned Colet, just so much do you blame me undeservedly in your present one. Yet shall I take your unmerited censure with considerably more equanimity than I received your equally unmerited praises. For when accused, not only can I free myself from blame, but in addition show that I was not at fault, since sometimes it seems to be characteristic of men who are hungering and greedy for praise ostentatiously to refuse it, not doing so naïvely so that they may not be praised, but rather that they may be praised oftener or more lavishly. You, I believe, wished to try me in both ways, as to whether I would be pleased when honored by the commendation of so great a man as you, and whether I would feel nettled at a slightly stinging rebuke. You must indeed be most unswerving in your affection, who are so careful, so cautious, so slow, and so circumspect in the selection of your friends. But I am only joking. For as I was glad to be even unmeritedly praised a little while ago by the most praised of men, so now I am glad to be admonished by the most sincere of friends. Therefore, hereafter, praise or blame your Erasmus as you will, provided I have a letter from you every day, than which nothing can be more acceptable.
>
> But now for an answer to yours, lest the youth who brought it return to you empty-handed. Do you not feel exactly as I do, my Colet, when you say that you do not like this modern school of theologians, who spend all their lives in mere quibbling and fallacious cavilling? Not that I condemn their studies, for I approve of every kind of study; but when these are their sole studies, and not based on more ancient and polished literature, they seem to me calculated to make a man superficial and contentious, though others may possibly look upon him as being wise. For these studies, by a certain barren and crabbed subtlety, exhaust the mind, and neither quicken it with sap, nor animate it with the breath of life. And what is the worst of all, by the obscurity of their phraseology, and the clap-trap of their style, they denude of all her beauty that queen of the sciences, Theology, enriched and beautified by the lofty mode of expression of the ancient authors. Thus with thorns they entangle that study which was made so easy to us by the intellects of the early writers, confusing everything while, as they say, they are trying to explain it. And hence you behold her who was formerly most admirable and full of majesty, now almost mute,



JOHN COLET
Holbein

destitute, and shabby. Meanwhile we are becoming victims to a certain seductive but morbid craving for never-ending discussions; strife breeds strife, and we proudly thrust and fend about the veriest trifle.

Then, that we may appear to have added something to the investigations of the older theological writers, we have, with much assurance, laid down certain laws in accordance with which God has performed His mysterious works; when at times it were better to accept the fact, but to leave the method to the omnipotence of the Almighty. Add to this, that for the sake of showing our cleverness we oft debate questions which pious ears will hardly tolerate, as when we query whether or not God could assume ridiculous characters.[2] This might be allowed, if anyone cared to do it moderately now and then as a means for sharpening the mind. And immersed in such things we live and die, attracted to them as to the rocks of the Sirens, and preferring this to every other sort of literature. Then again, in these days of ours almost all those who apply themselves to the study of theology, the highest of all studies, are those who, on account of their dull and unfit minds, are hardly suited for any sort of literature.

However, I have said these things not about the learned and worthy teachers of theology, whom I especially look up to and esteem, but about that shabby and supercilious crowd of theologians who consider the learning of the rest of mankind as nothing compared with theirs. When you, dear Colet, took upon yourself to wage war to the utmost of your powers against this stubborn race of people, so that you might restore to its former splendor and dignity our ancient and true theology, now beset and entangled by their thorny subtleties, you assumed a task, I declare, in many respects most beautiful, most serviceable to theology itself, most wholesome likewise for all students, and especially for those of this very flourishing University of Oxford; but one, unless I am mistaken, which will bring you much trouble and hatred. But your learning and industry will overcome the troubles you may meet, while the greatness of your mind will make you indifferent to their hatreds. There are some even among these very theologians who will be desirous and able to second your noble efforts. Nay, every one will give you his good right hand, since there is not one of the professors of this famous University who has not listened most attentively to your public lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul during the last three years. And, indeed, I know not which should be the more admired in this last regard: the modesty of these men, teachers as they are of everyone else, who do not hesitate to appear as the pupils of a man so young as you, with naught of the weighty influence which a Doctor's degree might confer; or your unique erudition, eloquence, and lofty character, which they consider worthy of the honor they do you.

[2] This rendering is as full as the passage merits for us of to-day. The text is: "Quum querimus num Deus potuerit diabolum aut asinum assumere."

I am surprised, moreover, not that you have taken on your shoulders this immense task, to which you are equal, but that you invite me, a mere nobody, to take part in so magnificent an undertaking. For you exhort me, nay, you almost demand reproachfully that, just as you are expounding St. Paul, so I should attempt to warm up the cooling students of this University during these winter months (as you put it) by expounding the ancient Moses, or the eloquent Isaiah. But I, who have learned to know myself, am well aware how scant is my equipment, and how little claim I may make for the learning which would be necessary for undertaking such a thing; neither do I feel that I have the strength of mind to sustain the ill will of so many men strongly defending their own point of view. Such an affair requires a most skilful general, not a novice. Now do not say that I ought to be ashamed to refuse; rather ought I to feel more ashamed if I did not refuse. My dear Colet, you are not wise to seek water from a dry rock, as Plautus says. How can I have the effrontery to teach what I have not learned? How shall I warm up others when I am myself shivering? It would seem to me rasher than rashness itself were I to essay my powers in so great a task and, according to the Greek proverb, to attempt "to convert a coarse jar of clay into a piece of the finest porcelain." "But I fully expected that you would," you will say, and complain that you have been deceived. In that case you must find fault with yourself, not me. It is not by me that you were deceived, since I never promised anything of the sort, nor even held out a hope of such; but you deceived yourself when you were unwilling to believe the real facts about me when I told them to you. I did not come hither to teach poetry or rhetoric, which ceased to be agreeable to me after they had ceased to be indispensable. That sort of teaching I refuse, because it bears only a slight relation to my plan of life; your sort of teaching I must decline as beyond my capacity. In the case of the former you blame me undeservedly, dear Colet, since I have never proposed to myself the cultivation of what they call secular literature as a profession; to the latter task you exhort me vainly, since I know my exceeding inability for such an undertaking.

But even were I fitted to do it, I could not, for I shall be returning shortly to my deserted Paris. In the meantime, as the winter partly retards me, and the flight of a certain duke prevents my leaving in safety,[3] I betook myself to this celebrated University to spend a month or two with men like yourself rather than with the fashionably dressed dandies of the court. So far is it from my mind to desire to discourage you in your excellent and pious endeavors that, since I can not yet suitably assist you, I promise you all the earnest encouragement and sympathy that you could wish. Nay, more, as soon as I feel conscious of having the strength and the requisite ability, I will come to your aid and assist you to the best of my

[3] Professor Allen informs us that this was Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, following whose treason a royal proclamation was issued forbidding anyone to leave the kingdom.

powers in defending true theology. Meanwhile, nothing will give me greater pleasure than discussing daily between ourselves, as we have been doing, either orally or by letter, questions of Holy Scripture. Farewell, dear Colet. That kindest of priors, Richard Charnock, my host, and our common friend, begs me to send you his best wishes.

Oxford, from the College of Canons of the Order of Saint Augustine, which is commonly called Saint Mary's. October, 1499.[4]

But his visit was rapidly drawing to its close, and we next find him paying a farewell call on Lord and Lady Mountjoy at their Greenwich country home. More, accompanied by another young lawyer named Arnold, came down from London to see him before his departure, and, during a walk which the three of them took, led them to call at Eltham Palace nearby, where the young Prince Henry, who was afterwards the celebrated Henry VIII, and his two sisters and baby brother, were living under the joint care of nurses and tutors. Young as Prince Henry was, he had already acquired some taste for literature, a circumstance which perhaps explains the fact that both More and Arnold offered him something in manuscript for his delectation. Erasmus was a little chagrined at having come empty-handed, and thereupon bound himself to the Prince to make good his default in this regard by sending him something later, a promise which he was not permitted to forget, as the young Henry sent him a note during the repast which followed, telling him that he should hold him to his word. The result was the verses of which he spoke in his letter to Sixtin previously quoted, and of which he did not appear to be very proud.

It is probably from Greenwich that he wrote his jovial letter to Andrelini, which has been so much quoted on account of its free comments on the custom of kissing which he alleges was so common in those days:

I too am getting on well in England. Your humble servant is now a fair hunter, and not a bad horseman; he can act the courtier as well as the best of them, and can bow gracefully and smile as affably as if it were quite natural to him. How are things with me, you ask? They are turning out very well. If you are wise, you too will fly hither. How can a man so satirical as you take pleasure in growing old among those Gallic clodhoppers?[5] But, alack, your gout, which may the fiend fly away with, prevents. If you only knew the charms of Britain, Fausto, i'faith, you would hasten hither with winged feet; and if the gout would not permit you, then would you wish yourself Daedalus.

For, to mention only a single attraction, the maidens here are divinely handsome, gentle, unreserved, and such as you would

[4] Eras. Ep. 108.

[5] "Clodhoppers" scarcely renders his expression "merdas Gallicas," the coarseness of which some of his biographers have sought to soften by stating that it was a favorite expression of Andrelini. How this would excuse Erasmus' lack of taste in using it also the present writer is at a loss to understand.

prefer even to your beloved Muses. Moreover, they have a custom which is never too much to be praised, that, wherever you go, you are kissed by all these fair ones. If you are leaving you are dismissed with kisses, and when you return you are met with kisses; when they come to visit you they kiss you, and when they are taking leave they kiss you again. If you meet one of them, you are well kissed; and, in a word, wherever you go you are embraced to your heart's content. And if, my dear fellow, you should only once taste how delicious and how fragrant these kisses are, you would at once desire to sojourn here, not like Solon for ten years only, but to the end of your life. The rest we will jest over when we meet again, for I expect to see you very shortly.[6]

This letter, on account of its comment on the freedom with which English maids and matrons allowed themselves to be kissed, has been very much discussed, arguments having been advanced pro and contra of the statements made by Erasmus. The present writer does not care to enter into this discussion, as it is a matter of very little moment. This, however, may be fairly said. For the first time in his life Erasmus has been admitted to see and enjoy the domestic happiness of home life. This is something that he had never tasted from the time he lost his own mother at thirteen years of age, since when he had lived in a college, a monastery, a bishop's mansion, and a hired apartment in Paris. What a change to him now at thirty-three to be admitted to the intimacy of some of the best homes of England, and to be initiated into the real English home life in its most domestic and sacred aspects. We are inclined to fear that his life in Paris with the gay Andrelini was not the best possible one for a young ecclesiastic, and that the Bishop of Cambrai, William Herman, and his superiors at Steyn may have had much justification for their doubts as to its moral effects on his volatile nature.

Another thing that this letter proves to us very conclusively is his contempt for the French, which he expresses by the vulgar phrase which we have very feebly translated above. He disliked the French, and we know that he hated their language and never made any great progress in it to the end of his days.

Perhaps one of the last letters which he wrote previous to leaving England was to Robert Fisher who was at that time in Italy; and, as it gives his opinions of some of the great and good men whom he had met in London, Oxford, and elsewhere, during his visit, it will be profitable to transcribe as much of it as pertains to that subject:

"Well," you will say, "how does our dear England suit you?" If you have any confidence in my word at all, dear Robert, pray believe me in this, that nothing ever pleased me so much. I found the climate here so very mild and healthful, and so much refinement and

[6] I have ventured to place this letter at the end of the English visit rather than at the beginning, where Professor Allen has placed it, for the reason that Erasmus especially says that he is to meet Andrelini in a very short time, or, as he puts it, "Nam videbo te, spero, propediem." (Eras. Ep. 103.)

erudition, not of the trite and commonplace, but of the abstruse, accurate, and classic, both in Latin and Greek, that now I no longer sigh for Italy, except to visit it simply. When I hear my friend Colet, I seem to be listening to Plato himself. Who does not admire in Grocyn his absolute mastery of the sciences? What judgment more acute, more lofty, or more penetrating than that of Linacre? Has Nature ever created a gentler, sweeter, or happier character than that of Thomas More? But why need I go over the rest of the catalogue? It is wonderful to say what a widespread and dense crop of classic literature is flourishing here; for which reason you ought to hasten your return as much as possible. Lord Mountjoy so loves you, so bears you in his mind, that of no one else does he speak more frequently or more affectionately. Farewell. London, in haste. December 5, 1499.[7]

So his holiday was over and he had to go back to his "deserted Paris." Why he chose to turn his back on England where all his newest and best friends now were and where he might have enjoyed life as he had never had the opportunity to do so before, is a question that has troubled all his biographers. He had deliberately refused the offer of Colet to associate himself with him in his work of expounding the Scriptures, and it is needless to say that the emoluments of the position would have been supplied either by the University of Oxford, or from the purse of the wealthy Colet. Thus his financial worries would have been at an end. But it could not be. The fact of the matter, the solution of the mystery, it now appears, is that Erasmus was in England like a runaway schoolboy enjoying a stolen holiday, and ready to suffer the stern reprimands of his superiors if the thing should reach their ears. Always looming before his eyes must have been the time when he must return to his monastery, unless something should intervene to prevent it. Hitherto, the thing that had kept him away from Steyn was the doctor's degree, which he had not yet secured, but on the acquisition of which his ecclesiastical superiors had undoubtedly set considerable store, for we find it alluded to in his letters to Herman, to the Bishop of Cambrai, and to Nicholas Werner, all of whom looked forward to his return to them with the coveted degree. To have stayed on in England, and to have accepted the brilliant offer of Colet, would have been to set the ruling powers of Steyn at defiance, and he was not yet prepared to go to that extremity. When he replied to Colet's offer that his plan of life comprehended more than the mere teaching of poetry and rhetoric he told the truth, but as usual he did not tell the whole of it. But we have learned enough from his correspondence with Colet, as quoted above, to know that Seebohm erred in saying that he came to Oxford to learn new branches of knowledge, especially Greek. He may have presented a few of his Greek difficulties to Grocyn, whom he afterward styled "preceptor," but the few weeks that he spent in Oxford would preclude anything further than that. This also disposes of Seebohm's other surmise, that "to gain his living by taking pupils, and to

[7] Eras. Ep. 118.

live the life of a scholar at some continental university, was probably the future floating indistinctly before him." This is still more unlikely than his former guess, because we have just seen that he refused the chance to stay at Oxford; and, during the course of his life, the same offers of university positions and emoluments were often made to him, and invariably refused, except in the case of the University of Louvain in Brabant, where he frequently stayed on account of its rich library, but where he never occupied a permanent teaching position.

But he had a plan of life, thought out no doubt, in the long watches of the night, and day by day growing and ripening in his fertile mind. All that we have seen and learned of his thoughts and aspirations points indubitably to the fact that his settled plan was to create, produce, and distribute to the world the riches of his own mind. Hitherto he had been a disseminator of the ideas of others; now he was to be the disseminator of his own.

CHAPTER XI

THE "ADAGIA"

Up to this time Erasmus had written nothing especially worthy of note, and whatever reputation for learning and accomplishments he may have acquired must have been gained by him through his personal contact or correspondence with those who now began to admire him. It will clarify this phase of the matter if we run over briefly what little he had already published and given to the world. In sending a list of his works to John Botzheim in 1523, he states that there was no kind of verse at which he had not tried his hand, resembling in this the majority of writers, who in youth furtively woo the Muse of poesy. It was at Paris that he first gained courage to play the rôle of poet:

> For there [he says] was published by some friends of mine [1] my heroic poem in the style of mixed tetrameter, dedicated to Fausto Andrelini, with whom I had recently struck up a friendship. After that, I wrote one in hendecasyllabic metre to Robert Gaguin, a man at that time of considerable influence in Paris, in addition to another which I wrote for him in alternative Glyconic and Asclepiadic metre.[2] Besides these things, I published [3] a poem, *De casa natalitia pueri Iesu,* and what else I wrote at that time is hard to remember. But many years before I had written a Sapphic *Ode on Michael the Archangel,* not of my own volition, but urged thereto by the entreaties of a certain great man who was the parish priest of a church dedicated to St. Michael. Although I had so restrained my pen that the effusion might pass for prose, yet he did not dare to make use of it because it was so poetical, he said, that it seemed to be written in Greek. Such was the miserable state of those times. And although I had spent much labor on the thing, this liberal fellow on receiving it offered me enough money to buy a pint of wine, a present worthy of the poem itself. I gave him thanks for his boundless liberality, but I refused the gift on the pretext that it was more than my poor effort deserved.[4]

If we add to the above the *Sylua odarum,* which he put through the press for his friend William Herman in 1497, and which contains some poems of his own as well, we shall have mentioned everything of note

[1] In 1495.
[2] 1495.
[3] In 1496, though it was printed without date, Antoine Denidel of Paris being the publisher.
[4] Eras. Ep. I, p. 3, l. 22.

that he had so far written. Nothing in any of these trifles, as he was fond of calling such things, was of sufficient merit to attract to him any amount of public notice; so we are forced to the conclusion which we have here reached, that he arrested the attention of people by his marvelous conversational powers, his pleasing manners, his ready wit, and his great and unusual learning. We may fairly assume that he talked as he wrote, pouring out the riches of his mind in a constant stream of classic allusion, witty phrasing, sparkling comment on men and things, possessing in addition a rare faculty for recalling the choicest and most appropriate anecdotes to illustrate and elucidate his meaning, and to send it home most efficaciously to the minds of his hearers. Nothing eluded his eye or escaped his memory, that memory which Colet termed "pertinacious," which could retain and reproduce a whole conversation, or even a discourse, almost word for word.

He lengthened his stay in England until after the Christmas holidays, and it must have given him extreme pleasure to witness the old-fashioned celebration of Christ's birth, with everything clad in the traditional holly and ivy, and the ceremonies attendant on the mistletoe meeting him everywhere he turned. And that he was not forgotten by the good will of his friends in that happy and holy season we may assume from the fact that he was leaving England with a goodly sum of money, the gift probably of his many admirers there. Unfortunately, when he reached Dover[5] to embark for Boulogne, this money was confiscated by the customs-officers, under a law of the land which forbade the taking of money, beyond a certain fixed sum, out of the country. We may surmise that the customs-officers knew no Latin, and we are aware that Erasmus knew no English, so that any attempt on his part to explain the circumstances of the case was foredoomed to failure. This loss was a terrible blow to him, for he needed the money badly to pay his debts in Paris. He never forgot it, and there were few of his friends whom he failed to make cognizant of his misfortune, for we find Beatus Rhenanus telling the story to the Emperor Charles V, forty years afterwards.[6]

On landing at Boulogne he set out at once for Tournehem to find Batt, who meant both sympathy and assistance for him in his great loss. Batt received him with open arms, and he spent in his company two busy days, relating over and over again his English experiences and his plans and ambitions for the future. From here he wrote to Mountjoy an account of his treatment by the officials at Dover, which letter is unfortunately lost; but we have one written to Mountjoy, ostensibly by Batt but in reality by Erasmus, in which the matter is gone into again with tiresome iteration. He does not ask Mountjoy for money, but at least the latter shall not for a moment remain in doubt that he needs some. Another reason for the letter is to remind Mountjoy that Erasmus had appreciative friends awaiting him on his return from England; and since the letter shows quite a touch of Erasmian shrewdness we will give it as it stands:

[5] January 27, 1500. [6] Eras. Ep. IV.

James Batt to the most noble William Mountjoy:

The return of my Erasmus was most anxiously awaited and desired by me; not that I grudged him to you, but that I love him so well. I could not but feel much pained when he told me about that bitter misfortune of his, of which I had a foreboding. What did I not fear for him? How often did I dream very serious dreams about him? And I was even anxiously pondering on his affairs at the moment when his letter was handed to me. However the matter turns out, I rejoice. I rejoice, my Lord, that I behold again so sweet a part of my soul, even though despoiled and harassed; although I do not love him so fatuously that I would not prefer him to have remained safe and sound with you rather than have been restored to me plundered and robbed with such contumely. Immortal God! cannot even poetry and literature be safe from such harpies? The fact that he was a philosopher saved Plato from the inhabitants of Aegina when he was on trial for his life. The monstrous Phalaris himself is said to have used his physician, Pythagoras the philosopher, and also Stesichorus the poet, with the greatest kindness and liberality. But what is the use of repining about such a hopeless affair at this late day? We must bear, not blame, what we cannot change; and I feel that I ought to be ashamed to be so depressed, when he bears the calamity with buoyant and undiminished courage. Oh, what a wonderful thing is that philosophy of his which he has always preached and practised! I should have been the one to soothe his grief with gentle words; but he, laughing, bids me dry up my tears and be of good cheer. He declares that he is not sorry that he went to England; and that the loss of the money was not without the greatest profit to him, because he made friends there whom he prefers to the riches of Croesus. We spent two nights together. Good heavens, with what affection he told me, in his most eloquent manner, of the kindness of Prior Richard, of Colet's erudition, and of More's suavity of speech; so much so that if it were permissible I myself would crave the pleasure of beholding such learned and generous souls. And you, Mountjoy, he so depicted, from head to foot, as the saying is, that though I was earnestly desirous of your affection before, now in manifesting my love towards you I will not yield to Erasmus himself, who yet loves you more than his very eyes. So far is he from holding it against you that he deplored in my presence the trouble you had had with him, in taking on yourself much labor and expense for his sake. Finally, when he was departing, he bade me again and again to write to you as often as possible; and although I shrank from so doing on account of your great learning and my own ignorance, yet that I might not seem to be lacking in duty, I send you this letter, such as it is, which if it do not offend you, I will often repeat. May God grant that I may soon enjoy your nearer acquaintance, some hope of which Erasmus holds out. For your great kindness and generosity towards my Erasmus I am under an immense obligation to you, and will ever so consider myself. For

I hold myself more indebted to anyone who does a favor to him than if he conferred it on myself.

I pray that your most noble lady, your very good father-in-law, and the rest of your family may enjoy the blessing of health.

From Tournehem Castle, February, 1500.[7]

We feel that Erasmus wrote or dictated this epistle, though we cannot prove it; but any man, after reading five or six of his letters, will hardly fail to recognize both the style and the Latinity, which were peculiarly his own.

On reaching Paris he at once plunged into literary work, being, no doubt, rested, stimulated, and inspired by his English visit. He was thirsting for fame, and felt the creative spirit strong within him. The example of those great souls whom he had just left on the other side of the Channel was spurring him on to show that he was indeed worthy of the meed of praise they had so lavishly accorded him. So he cast around for subjects to be treated which would exhibit his profound learning and, at the same time, show that his writings were just as attractive as his conversation.

The subject which he chose for his first book came to him naturally enough, for it was the result of his dwelling on the compliments to his erudition, and the openly expressed admiration that he had encountered in England for his marvelous facility in quoting the classic proverbs, that put it into his head to compose a work wherein he might show to his English admirers and the whole learned world, in compact form, but at greater length, his wonderful capacity in this direction. He admits that this is so in the preface to the book itself, where he says to Mountjoy, to whom he dedicated it:

> I was induced to undertake the work, partly at your kind urging, together with the flattering entreaties of Prior Richard . . . and partly by the hope that my labor, if not a source of glory to the author, might be profitable and gratifying to its readers—to those surely who are disgusted with a commonplace style of conversation, and are desirous of a more graceful and polished mode of expression. . . .[8]

And so he wrote his *Adages,* the task taking him about two months to complete, which will give us some idea of the celerity with which he worked. He exacted tribute of books and manuscript codices of the writers of antiquity from all his friends, and we have some of his notes to Gaguin begging the loan of Macrobius, Quintilian, and George of Trebizond. In his feverish anxiety to finish the work he must have eaten little and slept less, and he did not permit even a slight illness to deter him, as he informed Lord Mountjoy. In his dedication to the latter, he enters at some length on what he conceived to be the nature, form, and function of an adage, a real, concise, and complete definition of which caused him some difficulty. The best he could devise, and this only after issuing several editions, was: "A celebrated saying,

[7] *Ibid.,* 120.

[8] Preface to first edition, § 1.

remarkable for a certain shrewd unusualness." This is no more satisfactory than that of Lord Russell: "The wisdom of many and the wit of one." Under the definition of Erasmus we should have to admit the apophthegms of Solomon and the Ecclesiasticus; as also the sayings of Meïdan, Zamachsjar, Sadi, and Lockman, few of which conform to his idea of an adage. There is nothing novel or unusual about the adage "Two heads are better than one," or "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Far from novelty being the main factor, it is generally the universality of the thought which leads to iteration, and hence to perpetuation. In all ages from the days of primitive man to the present time, the race has tried to preserve its aggregate wisdom under the form of short and pithy sentences, each containing a nugget of moral philosophy derived from the personal experience of the individual, and serving as a guide to future action. Being short, they are easily remembered and easily expressed, and hence gain a wide and permanent currency. There were reviewers and critics to fear even in those days, and Erasmus essayed to meet all their possible objections in his own whimsical way. From his lengthy dedication we may excerpt the following in illustration of this:

> If any man looks for eloquence in my Collection, the subject does not lend itself to that, but rather to instruction. If there be those whom my diction offends as being too rhetorical, I will adduce the adage "Marjoram is offensive to swine." Someone will stickle for order; Gellius was careless in that regard. I may seem too curt to some; brevity becomes an editor. I may be styled verbose; this is allowed to the inexperienced. I may be blamed for writing the work of others; he who is writing his own is not writing adages. Some will be called obsolete; but age commends a proverb. Some adages will displease because they are not self-evident; you will at least be admonished even if you do not learn their lesson. But some of these are unimportant; yes, but there is a place even for such in a large collection. Some of them will seem to lack sparkle; that is true, but a jewel shines less brightly on a dunghill than on a signet-ring; and what in themselves seem lifeless in a favorable setting are full of charm. Serious things are not agreeable to the merry, or funny things to the serious-minded; but I have written for everybody. If they appear somewhat few, I gathered and dictated them in a short two months, while convalescing from sickness and engaged in many other matters. On the other hand, if they appear too many, I have omitted not a few. Nor will there be lacking those to whom all this will seem mean and insignificant; yet at times the greatest praise and real worth are derived from small things. If anyone shall say that they are a trifle bare and lonesome, let him wait patiently for the completed work. For I have sent out thus much with this in view, that I might ascertain what success a new work of this kind would have, and I intend to make the attempt without incurring a great expense. If anyone will point out my mistakes in kindness, he will deserve many thanks from me;

but if in malice, still shall he have a hearing. He who foolishly criticizes what he does not understand shall merit the adage of Apelles, "Let the cobbler stick to his last." There will be some one whom nothing herein will please; I did not write for him.

You have here, dearest William, an epistle verbose and proverbious (being indeed about proverbs), in which I fear that I have been utterly forgetful of the oldest adage of all, "Not too much of anything," and that long since replete with adages, you may grow sick at the rest as at cabbage warmed over. Farewell, therefore, most noble youth, with your worthy Lady, and kindly accept this specimen of a future work, to which, unless you dampen my ardor, I shall make many additions, duly pruned and polished. To this I will add another work written with no resources other than my own. "Gracious!" you will exclaim, "another cloud of adages!" But these are not going to be adages, but somewhat like them, yet something that will please you far more, I know. Farewell. Paris, June, 1500.[9]

Two years previously[10] Polydore Vergil had issued a small collection of adages which was the prototype of all the collections which followed, including that of Erasmus. It contained about three hundred adages extracted from the ancient authors, indexed fairly well, and showing great industry and exquisite scholarship. Then two years afterwards came the monumental work of Erasmus, consisting of over eight hundred adages culled from a more careful review of the classics, and illustrated with notes, comments, and references. Now we should expect him to have made some allusion to Polydore Vergil's work which had been so recently issued, but he said not a word. This nettled Polydore, and gave him an opportunity to accuse Erasmus of envy, vanity, and even of plagiarism and a desire to rob him of his well-earned honors. He said that he had been the first one to beat out a path in this sort of thing, and that his tracks were still visible and not difficult for anyone to follow. While this is not strictly true, it is true enough as far as popularizing classic proverbs was concerned, for Polydore's book did not by any means fall dead from the press. H. Bebel's collection is generally regarded as the first along these lines, although, even still earlier, we have the *Proverbia communia Germana et Latina,* printed at Leipzig in 1490, and a work printed by Martin Landsburg in the same town and about the same year, entitled *Egregiæ sententiæ, siue iocundi flores doctorum poetarum,* in both German and Latin, both of which titles are sufficiently explanatory to show that neither Polydore Vergil nor Erasmus was the originator of the idea of such collections. Erasmus at no period had any great amount of magnanimity: he certainly should have given credit to Polydore Vergil, whose format and methods he had certainly seen and studied, for he followed them to the letter in his own work. But when we have said that we have said all that is necessary, for his book is so much larger than Polydore's and so much enriched with note and comment, that the latter's sinks into insignificance in comparison.

[9] *Idem, ad fin.*

[10] 1498.

But, if Erasmus had only very few predecessors in working this literary vein, he assuredly had many emulators and successors even in his own lifetime, for we find that Peter Gringère of Lorraine published in 1527 *Notables Enseignmens, Adages, et Proverbes.* In 1533 Peter Gregnet of Burgundy printed his *Mots dorés du sage Caton;* in 1540 Gilles Correzet issued his *Hecatomgraphie,* and these were followed in 1549 by the *Libro de Refranes, en el qual se contienen quatro mil y trezientes Refranes* of Pedro Vallés, and in 1557 by the *Proverbes et Dits sententieux* of Charles de Bevelles of Noyon. In 1710 M. de la Mesangère sent forth his massive *Dictionnaire des Proverbes Français,* which for many generations remained the chief French authority on this subject; while in England James Howell had as far back as 1659 published his *Proverbs, or Old Sayed Saws and Adages in English or the Saxon tongue, Italian, French, and Spanish, whereunto the British* [i. e. Welsh] *for their greater antiquity and weight are added.* These writers, as well as many others of all nations, had recourse to the bounteous store of proverbs amassed by Erasmus, and he will always be regarded as the great pioneer and exemplifier of this branch of literature.

This was a strenuous time for him, for he was writing, teaching, and studying Greek all at once. Write he would, teach he must, and to master Greek he had definitely decided on as a *sine qua non* of scholarship. He wrote Batt that he was immersed in literature, and that Greek was almost killing him, for he had no leisure, no money to buy books, no means to pay an instructor. He was put to his wits' end for the wherewithal to sustain life, and begged Batt not to be offended if he poured his troubles into his lap. He tells him that he had been sick since he left him at Tournehem to return to Paris, and that he finds the French climate not all that could be desired, as almost every evening he had a rise of temperature and feared an attack of the same fever that had laid hold of him two years ago; "and if that fever gets its grip on me again, dear Batt, it will be all over with your Erasmus." However, he recovered, once more through the intercession of St. Genevieve, and under the ministrations of his kind friend and physician William Cop, a disciple equally of Aesculapius and the Muses. Then, after informing Batt of his projected book of adages, he continues:

> I am glad you are hastening to her Ladyship on her special invitation, and I have little doubt that it is partly on my account, for I told her all about that affair of mine, but in execrable French. So I will get along until the end of the month on borrowed money, until something good reaches me from you; otherwise I would have returned to you there. I beseech you, dear Batt, to marshal your former courage, for I know there is nothing that you cannot accomplish if only you devote yourself to it. There is one thing about you that annoys me, and that is, that because I had once written you a fictitious letter from England, you assume that everything I write you is feigned. And yet in that very letter which you deem not genuine, I hope to die if I feigned anything. So lay aside any

such opinion of me, and see to it that you regard nothing which I write, especially to yourself, as insincere.

It is my design, after I have finished the work in hand, to bend my every effort to the completing of the Dialogue,[11] and then to devote all this summer to the writing of books. In the autumn, if possible, I will go to Italy to obtain my Doctor's degree, and do you, my only hope, see to it, I beg of you, that I may have the leisure and the opportunity. I have given myself up entirely to Greek; and as quickly as I get any money I shall first buy Greek authors, and after that clothes. . . . Farewell, my dear Batt, and succor your Erasmus. When I have recovered my health, nothing shall be neglected on my part. Paris, April 12, 1500.[12]

It would seem that the kind-hearted and much-enduring Batt had observed something in his dealings with Erasmus that very much displeased him; but of what nature this was we have no means of finding out. He evidently expostulated with Erasmus on the subject, and had urged his grievance so vigorously that the latter could find no valid excuse; so in lieu thereof he wrote him that deprecatory letter which we have previously quoted, in which he said that he was running away to Britain, or even further, in order to get away from him. But Batt was too useful and profitable a man to let go just at present; so on his return from England, as we have already seen, it was to his dear Batt that he hastened that he might make his peace with him. We glean that Batt was disposed to be as friendly as ever, but perhaps not so strenuous in his efforts for the amelioration of his friend's financial condition as he had hitherto been. Erasmus was quick to perceive this changed attitude, and accordingly began at once to work on Batt's weakest side. This is what he meant when he informed Batt that he was going to bend every effort to the finishing of the Dialogue. Now, the Dialogue, we must remember, was the *Antibarbari,* in which Batt was one of the characters, and which was to hand down his name to posterity linked with that of Erasmus. The little stratagem succeeded, as Erasmus knew it would; and from this time on to his death, Batt strained every nerve to aid and assist his friend, although he never lived to see the publication of the *Antibarbari.*

But even Batt's utmost efforts were not sufficient to keep pace with the increasing expenditures of money made necessary by the mode of living which Erasmus had adopted, and by the added expense of publishing his books. Money had to be begged or borrowed from some source, and he had to swallow his pride and accept it thankfully wherever offered, and sue for it whenever there seemed to be the slightest chance of obtaining it. In another letter to Batt he shows the desperate state of affairs thus:

I beseech and adjure you, dear Batt, if any spark of your old affection for me still remains, that you will take thought of the pass I am in. You, with that suave and racy disposition of yours, think that I am fortunate; but in my own estimation, unless I am most

[11] The *Antibarbari.*

[12] Eras. Ep. 124.

careful, I deem myself never to have been hitherto in such evil case as I now am, when N. gives nothing, her Ladyship promises from day to day, the Bishop is actually hostile, and the Abbot bids me to be of good hope. But meanwhile there arises no one who will lend me a hand except N. alone, and him, poor fellow, I have already so drained that he has nothing left to give; and as for deriving profits from the sale of my book, which was my only hope, the plague has removed that chance. Meanwhile many things have been floating before my mind. Where can I go without money? what if I am taken ill? and even if nothing like that should happen, what can I accomplish in my writing without a supply of books? To what can I look forward if I leave Paris? and, finally, what will my writings amount to without a degree? Is it ominous that they laugh at me and call me the "petitioner," as I observed them to do at St. Omer?

I write thus not to tire you out with my complaints, but to arouse you if you are sleeping. . . . Farewell, my dear James. . . .[13]

Allen understands that Mountjoy is indicated by the first N. referred to in the letter above, and he is undoubtedly right in his conjecture. In the same way we feel that the person represented by the second N., whom he had drained dry, was his friend Brother Nicholas Werner of the old monastic days at Steyn. We must not forget that he always loved this old monk, and referred to him many years afterwards as "Nicholas Werner of blessed memory." A love of literature probably first drew the attention of the older monk to his younger friend and, if we are correct in our conjecture, was the bond that united them in lasting friendship. We find a short note about this period to *A Certain Friend.* It indicates a large degree of understanding, intimacy, and mutual confidence to be subsisting between Erasmus and this friend.[14] Read the following where he turns to him as to a source of sympathy and comfort after his encounter with the Scotch tutor:

In your kindness, dearest N., I beseech you to pardon me for writing very little, and that little scarcely worth your while. Believe me, my desire was most ardent, but in time of trouble it is difficult to write in a jocund strain. I have not yet quite got myself in hand, nor returned to normal; still I endeavor, with the assistance of the Muses, to dedicate something to you which will be worthy of you. But meanwhile, lest you might think that I have shunned one iota of effort in your behalf, I have controlled my feelings as well as I was able, and have imitated our little Dionysia, who, as you know, sometimes sings and dances with tears in her eyes. When I have recovered my former equanimity, you shall ask in vain nothing which I am in a position to perform. I exhort you by our friendship that you will bend all your energy to learning, never doubting that you

[13] *Ibid.*, 128.

[14] Allen thinks this was Robert Fisher, but would Erasmus have been likely to send his regards to *omnes tuæ familiæ* if, as was likely, the terrible Scot was a member of that circle? It is difficult to place this letter.

will accomplish this in great measure. If you love learning you cannot hate me. Therefore I exhort you, not only for your own sake, but for mine as well. I trust you are well, and I pray for the welfare of all your household. Paris, July, 1497.[15]

And again in the following month:

If you are surprised that I have ceased for a time my former custom of writing to you, you must not for that reason suspect anything wrong, nor imagine that I am no longer affectionately yours just as I always was. Farewell. Paris, August, 1497.[16]

These were days of depression, when deep discouragement took possession of him, and friends to whom he could turn were few and far between. But undoubtedly Werner was one such friend, ready at all times to pour oil on his wounds, for no one knew better than he the sensitive nature of his young brother. The letter below is a cry for help and sympathy to this friend who never failed him in evil or good report:

Dear Father. I have been seriously ill for the last six weeks, nor do I yet see much signs of improvement. What a thing is the life of man, and with how many sorrows is it burdened! A slight fever, but recurring daily, has almost killed me. Now at length the world holds no pleasure for me, and I despise these former ambitions of mine. I long for that life where, in holy leisure, I may have time to devote myself to God alone, to meditate on the Holy Scriptures, and to wash away with tears my former errors. I am turning the matter over in my mind, and I hope that, with your aid and advice, I may at length accomplish it.

Cornelius of Gouda is covering himself with glory here. He is very much beloved by the Bishop of Paris, as well as by the Abbot. Farewell. Paris, April, 1498.[17]

Brother Werner must have certainly furnished the requisite sympathy and counsel, for we have another letter to him from Erasmus, written in a totally different strain and showing no desire to return to the monastery, "that life where, in holy leisure, he might have time to devote himself to God alone." On the contrary, the letter shows increased determination to continue on the lines which he had marked out for himself, and he winds up by saying:

I commend myself and my fortunes to your prayers, with the greatest affection. I desire, dear Father, that you will feel reassured; the Divine Power will attend me, I hope, and guide my ship into the wished-for harbor. Meanwhile, although I spread my sails to the breeze, yet I must not let go of the helm. May the Immortal God protect you. From Brussels, July 9, 1498.[18]

The letter to a certain person unnamed, which is numbered Epistle 86 in Allen, would indicate that Brother Werner had come to the rescue

[15] Eras. Ep. 59.
[16] *Ibid.*, 65.
[17] *Ibid.*, 74.
[18] *Ibid.*, 77.

in earnest. We may fairly infer that he has made a journey to some friend of Erasmus in the latter's interest, who prepares the way for his coming by the following note:

> When I found out that our N. [Nicholas Werner] was about to visit you there, I was unwilling that he should come fruitlessly, especially when he had vehemently requested me to recommend him to your favor. I therefore beg you to treat him in accordance with your old kindly custom. It is not unknown to me, nor is he in ignorance himself, how much you could do for me, and how great is your good will towards me. Bring it to pass that neither he may be deceived in his hopes, nor my good opinion of you be found at fault. You will gain for yourself a new friend in N., and to me you will become bound more closely than ever. Farewell. Paris, 1498.[19]

And here is a delightful letter addressed to the same "Certain Person," who, we may safely assume, was the same Brother Werner:

> I would have written oftener to you, dear N. (for I am wont to perform duties of this sort for friends with much pleasure), but I was afraid that if I disturbed your studies by my epistolary interruptions, or you did not derive any gratification from them, I might seem to be more of a nuisance than a friend. Now, of a certainty, I am no longer able to refrain (and I am speaking candidly), not because I have plenty of leisure, for that is something I have totally denied myself, but lest the discontinuance of my custom might seem to detract somewhat from my long-standing friendship for you. I have this feeling about you, dear N., that I shall have gone altogether astray if you do not cling to me with more than common regard.
>
> You will ask me what I am doing. I am serving my friends, and diverting myself with their pleasant company. "What friends are you boasting about, you insignificant little fellow?" you will say, "Is anyone desirous of either seeing or listening to you?" Indeed, I do not deny that prosperous men have the most friends; yet, of a truth, the poor lack not for some, and such as are the most constant and serviceable to them. With these I shut myself up in some corner, and, shunning the frivolous throng, I hold sweet converse with them in low tones, or I listen to them while they whisper something to me, or I commune with them as I would with myself. Is there anything more profitable than this? They never hide their secrets from me, yet they guard mine most faithfully. They never divulge abroad what we, as familiar friends, speak of freely amongst ourselves. They come when summoned, and do not present themselves uninvited. They speak to me when asked, and are silent when unbidden. They say what you wish, as much as you wish, and as long as you wish, never flattering, never pretending, never dissembling. Your own faults they freely point out to you, but speak disparagingly of no one else, and what they say is either

[19] *Ibid.*, 86.

pleasant or profitable. They direct you in prosperity, console you in adversity, while your changes of fortune move them not at all. They follow you into every danger, and stay with you to the last moment of your life. Amongst themselves the greatest sincerity is observed. I visit them from time to time, now choosing one companion, now another, with perfect impartiality.

With these dear friends, my good N., I hide myself away. For what riches or sceptres would I barter away such a retirement? But lest my metaphor may deceive you, inasmuch as I spoke just now of my dear friends, you must understand that I am speaking of my books, whose society has made me very happy, unfortunate only in this, that I have been unable to enjoy this happiness with you. I will not cease to exhort you, although there is no need of it, to apply your whole mind to lofty studies, admiring nothing commonplace, nothing mediocre, but ever striving towards the highest. I trust that you will often in the future confess that I gave you faithful and loving counsel.

I have undertaken a work on witticisms, proverbs, and sentiments. I have given you a few samples of them, and I hope to increase the number of them in a short time to three thousand, for it is a work, in my estimation, as agreeable as it is useful, and has never hitherto been attempted by anyone. If I perceive that you really like it, I shall the more willingly and ardently pursue the task. Meanwhile, farewell, and continue to regard me as affectionately as ever.[20]

There are some gleams of real affection in these lines, and we shall find, as we continue, that such tokens of deep feeling are very few in the huge mass of correspondence which Erasmus has left us. Now some of these letters which we have assigned to Brother Werner are addressed to him by name, and some are not. What was the reason for this? The explanation involves a slight sketch of the manner in which his letters were successively published, and by whom. We have previously remarked that he felt fully sure his name and fame were to be handed down to posterity; and he never permitted himself to forget the fact. Cicero writes to his friend Atticus: "My letters have never been collected for publication. Tiro has some seventy of them, besides which, a selection might be made from my letters to you; but I must look over and edit them; then and then only must they be given to the world." [21]

Like Cicero, Erasmus had a glimpse of his coming glory, and endeavored to prepare for it accordingly. Early in life he adopted the custom of copying his letters into a book for future publication; and in many of his later ones he intimates a desire that they be kept intact and safe from injury. During his residence in Paris, the period of which we are now treating, he was always anxious about the safety of this book containing the copies of his correspondence, and, five years afterwards, he felt that his fame and renown warranted the taking of further pre-

[20] *Ibid.*, 125. [21] *Cicero ad Atticum, in loco.*

cautions in this direction. To this end we find him writing to his brother monk at Steyn, Francis Theodoric, as follows:

> Dearest Friend. You would do me the greatest favor if you would see to it that the letters which I have written with studied care to different people may be collected, as far as possible. I have it in mind to issue a single volume of epistles, especially including many of those which I wrote to Cornelius of Gouda, most of those to my friend William, and a few of those to Servatius. Gather together whatever you can of them, and wherever you can, but do not send them except through the messenger whom I myself shall commission. . . . London, from the Episcopal Palace, 1505.[22]

As we have previously noted, Francis Theodoric was a fellow-monk, and, naturally, his quest for the desired letters would be confined to the various monasteries of the Augustinians, since the earlier correspondents of Erasmus, including William Herman, Servatius, Cornelius of Gouda, and Nicholas Werner, were all of them monks of that Order. The net results of Brother Francis' search were evidently unpleasing to Erasmus, but whether from the fact that they told the world more about himself than he cared to have known, or whether they did not possess sufficient literary merit, we do not know. However, we do know that he did not publish them at that time, nor at any time subsequently. Judge of his surprise then, while he was staying at Siena in 1509, at receiving from his friend James Piso, the Hungarian ambassador at Rome, a manuscript volume of these or similar letters of his which had been offered for sale in that city, and which Piso had bought as an agreeable present for him. The perusal of them was far from pleasing to him, for he immediately consigned them to the flames. Not one of his letters to this dear old monk Werner, and addressed to him, was ever published by Erasmus, and they never saw the light until more than a century afterwards, when they were discovered and printed by Merula in 1607. That the exclusion of his letters to those former friends of his youth was intentional seems to admit of no doubt; and we can only surmise that the memories they awoke within him were distasteful. As far as graceful style and elegant Latinity is concerned, they will bear comparison with his best work of after years. But there were two or three which we have already given [23] which were surely addressed to Werner, but which were made anonymous, or addressed simply "to a certain person," when Erasmus included them in the acknowledged correspondence which he edited and published in his *Farrago noua epistolarum* in 1519. Such a polished piece of literary art as the letter on page 131, wherein he describes his communings with his books, and of which we acknowledge the inadequacy of the translation, was too good in Erasmus' estimation to be allowed to perish; so he copied it from his letter-book, crossed off the name of the original recipient, and, thoroughly imbued with the importance of following Cicero's admonition to Atticus, edited and sent it forth to do service again, as a specimen of his keen descriptive powers.

[22] Eras. Ep. 186.

[23] See pp. 129 *sqq.*

Genius has generally been selfish, and Erasmus was no exception to the rule. When his friends ceased to be serviceable he dismissed them from his remembrance with scant ceremony. That William of Gouda, Andrelini, Gaguin, and many others had been his very good friends, did not prevent him from speaking contemptuously of them when he was able finally to dispense with them. Had Shakespeare known Erasmus he would not have made Iago say, "I never found a man that knew how to love himself." He was a most egregious example of self-love, but justified himself most probably as Voltaire used to do.[24] However, with regard to Brother Nicholas Werner we must note an honorable exception, for he never spoke to him or of him but with the greatest love and affection.

But we must go back to where we left off, namely, to the time when the *Adagia* was being ushered into the world. This occurred in June or July, 1500, and the book itself contains a short letter from Andrelini which we will give:

> Dearest Erasmus: I have read with the greatest pleasure the *Adages* which you sent me. The work is such in my opinion that it must exact praise even from hostile judges; so well are the useful and the agreeable intermingled that it will certainly win the approval of everyone. I not only exhort you to present to the public such pleasing and fruitful literary compositions, but assuming the right of a friend I command it, lest forsooth you might seem to be making too little of your great work, and appear disdainful of a book which has been awaited so long. They are not to be feared who are wont to deride the writings of others. Such writings need fear the sneers of no man, since they are going to be of the greatest delight and profit to us. Farewell, and give my kind regards to Augustine Caminade, my more than friend. Paris, June 15, 1500.[25]

[24] Voltaire, *A Philosophical Dictionary*, "Self-Love."
[25] Eras. Ep. 127.

CHAPTER XII

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES: EFFORTS OF BATT

The pestilence which for a long time had been endemic in Europe had lately increased in virulence, and became furiously epidemic at this time. This dire plague which had so often decimated the population was probably a form of our present influenza, but more fatal in its effects on account of the dense ignorance of all sanitary precautions then prevailing. On its appearance in any locality the people became panic-stricken and fell an easy prey to the malady. Erasmus appears to have had a great terror of the disease and made no secret of his fears; and when it appeared in Paris in 1500 he fled incontinently to the University of Orléans, where he had some friends. Before he went, however, he wrote to Batt acquainting him with his intention, and, incidentally, betraying a feeling of childish jealousy towards Brother William Herman, who, it seems, had been paying court to the Lady of Veere just as Erasmus had. The greatest men have been full of pettiness, and Erasmus apparently had his full share. A few paragraphs of the letter will show this plainly:

> . . . Finally, your coolness occurred to me; for I remembered how coldly and indifferently you suggested that I might seek refuge with you. And I do not know whether even literature interests you now since you have fallen into a new kind of love in which flattery warms desire, though the amount of it used on you does not, as in others, induce loathing.
>
> You know what I am talking about. It is no secret to me that you have developed a preference for William, and that you have devoted your entire attention to assisting him; yet I am so far from being jealous that I admit my obligations to you on this very account. But surely, to abandon me now, after laying out the groundwork of my welfare, what is this other than to become the father of children and, when they are born, to expose them to perish? My Lady provided magnificently for William's traveling expenses; me she sent empty away, though he was only returning to his native land, while I was leaving it; he was hastening to his carousals, while I was going back to my books. You will say that my Lady is sufficiently opulent to help us both. But you are not ignorant of the tricks of courtiers, and you well know the airy shiftings of women's minds. But I will say no more, for in any case, if I am to be defrauded of my expectations, I shall rejoice that they are to be transferred to my friend William. But if my suspicions are false, as I truly hope they are, and you are the same Batt that you were wont to be, make my Lady

do what she promised and, in addition to this, move her to give me a benefice. Consider this last as given to yourself and not to me; and thus would a way be found for you to possess a benefice, though you are not in orders. I will tell you why I particularly desire this latter item. I wish to leave France as soon as possible. I desire to live with my brethren, since I see that this would be better for my reputation and more beneficial for my health. For now my fellow-countrymen who are home believe me to be away from them for the sake of a free life, while those of them who are here in Paris suspect that I am not desired by my brethren, and that I live here as one expelled. But this is the weightiest reason, finally, if there were no other—I want to see you and my friend William somewhat oftener. Paris, September, 1500.[1]

And this to the faithful Batt. The whole tone of his letter, and especially the charge that he had been favoring William at Erasmus' expense, rather nettled Batt; and, although we have not his reply, we can judge from the penitence expressed by Erasmus in his very next letter that Batt must have written to him in rather stinging terms:

I see that I have made you angry with that letter of mine, which you consider cross, but which I would call rather jocular; or, if there was any bitterness in it, the very natural anguish of my mind caused me to pour it out before you, but not against you. However, I acknowledge my error, which is twofold, inasmuch as my desperate condition, and your happy one, did not occur to me. For it is not proper for a most afflicted man to appear facetious, but suppliant; and much less should he ever be sarcastic or petulant, especially with one whom fortune has lifted up to prosperity, and to whom he is indebted in many ways. Besides, I know it is the fashion of courtiers, when they have by some small favor made slaves of those whom Dame Fortune has cast down, not only to refuse to hear any reproach from them, but not even to tolerate a feeble supplication; expecting, on the contrary, a burst of gratitude, after they have crushed the wretches with insults. But as it is wont to occur in grave diseases that men lose their senses, it happened to me in my acute mental distress that, when I was most afflicted, I could not remember that I was wretched. And I thought I could say anything to my Batt with impunity. For I have hitherto loved you so much (for why may I not say it?) that I was not afraid; and you are not unaware that the most ardent affection is incompatible with fear. But a love truly blind drew me on a little further than was proper, and I see my fault; nor do I hope to escape severe punishment, if I do not correct my error. Henceforth I will love my Batt as a friend, as a benefactor, as a scholar. I will revere him as my preceptor, as my king, in whose hands rests the power to destroy or help me. I will not refuse to be cudgeled, if hereafter you observe any word in my letters—I will not say insolent or overweening—but that is not entirely humble and suppliant, or which would not become a slave who fears the imminent torture. Nay,

[1] Eras. Ep. 129.

more, I will be thankful, my patron, that you have brought me to a recollection of myself, and made me realize my good fortune.

Now I will answer in order your very kind letter, and trust that you will kindly and graciously listen to me. First I will cast away from me entirely my custom of writing morosely; and if you think that I am not sufficiently sorry for my fault, I will seek to avoid no punishment, provided you receive me into favor; not to the extent that I hitherto enjoyed, for I am not so impudent as that; but it will be the greatest kindness if I may be permitted to cling to the outermost part of you. That the Provost really wishes me well is due to no merit of mine, I readily admit. I reverence and do homage to your affection for me, by favor of which you have commended me to so great a personage. You have promised my Lady to be a diligent and faithful patron to me; what shall I promise you in return, most learned Batt, for such kindness? What else except myself? And yet I have already been your slave for a long time. In sending me William's letter, you seemed to demand of me that I should go out and select a tree on which to hang myself. I perceive that it is all over with me, since he has superseded me; but why should I so impotently bear my misfortune when I have brought it on myself by my own stupidity? If you put me to the torture now I shall bear it, for I consider that easier to bear than to see William preferred to me. Suppliantly I ask you only one favor, and I beg it by your good fortune and by the gods who are angry with me, that if you have decided to destroy me you will not delay it by a lingering torture. . . .

Your inviting me to the Castle, if the plague drives me from here, has restored hope to my life, most forgiving Batt. Why can I not fly to your knees, and, prostrate, kiss your feet? I see that you wish me to be rescued, and not to die of starvation. For what chastisement is more bitter or more disgraceful? Dear patron, already the plague threatens me, and already I long to fly to that blessed castle, almost more than I would to Heaven. And yet you must pardon my timidity, for I still fear somehow that your anger against me has not yet burnt itself out; and when I can assure myself of this I will leave my sanctuary here. Meanwhile permit me, from a sense of shame, to stay here for a little while, until at length, having procured intercessors for myself, I can return.

Writing, as you do, that William's poem pleased you exceedingly makes me again feel that I have fallen; and I have no heavenly or earthly power to which to have recourse save you alone, who are to me a sort of divinity. . . . Farewell, my dearest and sweetest Batt. . . . Orléans, September, 1500.[2]

This letter leaves a somewhat unpleasant taste in one's mouth. In its published form, it is entitled by Erasmus: "a familiarly humorous letter, full of irony." It is the opinion of the writer that this title was added to render the letter publishable, and that, as originally written, it

[2] *Ibid.*, 130.

was a frank outburst. Even were this not so, if we give up the barren search for the "humor," and balance the "irony" by the hysteria, there yet remain a groveling tone, a dependent servility, an envy of William both undignified and childish, and a distress to the point of tears: all of which show us our subject in a very poor light indeed. Batt was evidently very near the end of his patience with him, and these offensive littlenesses of Erasmus were rapidly alienating his affection for his difficult friend. But Erasmus could not help these things: they were constitutional with him, the result of his birth and environment, his frail health, his vaulting ambition, and the necessity of looking to others for his maintenance. Hence he was entirely destitute of physical courage, and we may truly say that his moral fibre was defective. He was suspicious to a degree, and this warped his estimates of many of his friends who seemed willing enough to help him. There was, for instance, his unjust suspicion of Augustine Vincent, who seems to have been a man of considerable attainments, and to have exerted himself in obtaining profitable pupils for Erasmus. The following letter to Batt will show his suspicious nature very well:

> Dearest Batt: I hope you are enjoying the best of health. Matters between us are at present at such a pass that it is neither permitted nor pleasant for me now to flatter you lovingly nor to be peevish with you in joke. I send you herewith the state of my affairs; therefore I beseech you to aid me with that Battic courage of yours. The young man whom I sent to you loaded with books, and who promised to return within four weeks, I am anxiously expecting for now eight weeks. I, for one, am well aware of the many things that may happen unexpectedly to those who make such a journey: sickness, robbers, new occupations, and, in a word, the thousand other causes of delay. Yet not without reason does a great fear seize me lest there be some vast fraud in this affair. In the first place, you know the character and former goings-on of Augustine; also I hear that the young man was much in debt when with us, and neither wise nor reliable; yet withal admitted to Augustine's most intimate business affairs. These things have at length come to the surface, as it happens, "after the feast," as the saying is. I have often wondered to myself what was the reason for this sudden flood of generosity on Augustine's part, this abrupt metamorphosis of the man, so that he who was ever wont to filch other people's goods now gives freely of his own. For now at last he has been spending on me a bit more than he has received. Frequently a slight suspicion comes into my mind that he is baiting a trap for me, and that, once captured, I shall be made to pay roundly for this sport. This suspicion, unless I am much in error, is not far out of the way at the present reckoning. That you may understand the matter, listen to what has occurred.
>
> I came to Orléans from fear of the pestilence. Thereupon, shortly afterwards, one of the boys whom Augustine is tutoring fell ill, whether of the pestilence I know not, nor are we yet certain as to

that, for there is nothing more difficult to discover than that cuttlefishlike disease which lurks in its own inky blackness. But since the boy vomited constantly for four days, and had a continued diarrhoea, fearing that I might catch something from the foulness of his disease, I explained to Augustine that it would be more convenient if I were to go away somewhere for five or six days, thus giving him more room and, at the same time, freeing myself from those odors, and that afterwards I would return. Immediately Augustine, with this as a pretext, became hostile to me, although he tried to hide it with the greatest pains. He said he would not try to dissuade me, and bade me do what seemed best, that he had neither advice nor counsel to give. Now he had come to the conclusion that, at that moment, I did not have a penny, and without money could do nothing, so that I should have either to remain against my will, or encounter great difficulties. I betook myself to the home of a certain Antwerpian, Doctor James Tutor, professor of Pontifical Law, a very kind young man, one of my best friends, and withal a great student, admirer, and eulogist of my writings. But I went to his home with the understanding that when the boy was better I should return to Augustine's. Hereupon Augustine began not only to be angry with my friend, but also to be jealous, and allowed me plainly to infer, partly from his silence and partly from his enigmatic hints, that my return to his house was shut off. Although I was aware already, yet I desired still further to fish out of him the reason for his act. He pretended many, as is the fellow's custom; but those that lie much have not always good memories. What more? I recognized the animus of an enemy, of a traitor, of a robber, and, in a word, of Augustine—that former Augustine I will call him, whom I have partly described to you. I perceive that he is meditating harsh, perfidious, and deceitful measures, and such as are worthy of him; and especially does he conceal the fact that (unknown to me) he is going to meet the young man whom I sent to England, and relieve him of any money or letters which he may be bringing to me. What will he do then? Why, send him off in some other direction. I know many reasons why he could do this very easily. I am to be told that the young man has run away and cannot be found. Meanwhile something will happen, either that Augustine himself will take to flight somewhere, or that he will ruin me utterly by some means. Believe me, Batt, I expect from him only what one might expect from such an abandoned scoundrel. And, unfortunately, I fear that the young man has already returned, and that the robber has captured the spoils, and captured them in the way I have described. For it happened recently that, in his usual lying way, Augustine said he had heard some not very definite news about my young man, that he was now on the way back, and was returning, not by Paris, but by some other route. This was meant so that I might not hasten forward and intercept the young man on the way. I at once began to press him to tell me from whom he had heard this. At first the fellow was for trifling with

me and talked of other matters; but when I insisted on closely inquiring into the affair he said that he had got it from a certain person whose name he gave me. I thereupon sent to this latter to demand what he had heard about my messenger John. He told me nothing but what seemed to have been drilled into him by Augustine himself. I upbraided Augustine with being the author of the message which he had given to this person. The fellow blushed and changed the conversation; but at length, when I insisted, said that the man was drunk who said it, for, whatever it was, he himself had told it to him.

I could tell you a lot of trickery of this kind. But take this as certain, dear James, that nothing ever was clearer to me than that Augustine, if he can do it secretly, will attempt my ruin, and especially will lie in waiting for this money. Therefore, if you wish me to be saved, do not sleep on the matter, nor spare any labor or expense. For if I sail past this rock, I have confidence that everything else will be secure. This, therefore, is what I wish you to do, unless you have some better plan. If the young man has not yet returned from England, it may be that he will pass into France by some other route, that is, if he is so advised to do by his mentor. Hence if you have on hand any books, or money collected from the sale of books, let such not pass out of your keeping; hold what you have. But, if you have sent it into Zeeland, or anywhere else, and the young man has not yet returned, strive by all means to summon him to yourself and seize from him what he has, especially what belongs to me, so that you may not leave him with a penny in his charge. Tell him that you are sure that I will be there in a few days. And if you can under any decent pretext, detain Augustine's property also; for I have not yet received from him all my things. If the young man has already returned, and has been with you, at once inform me by the surest messengers on what day he left you, what money he had, and to whom addressed, so that I may be able to expose the transaction to this wolf Augustine, etc.[3]

And so on in this childishly yet malignantly suspicious manner for several paragraphs. And after all there was not the slightest basis for his suspicions, for in his next letter to Batt he says:

> Events have long since restored me to friendship with Augustine; he acknowledges his indebtedness, but says that he has not the wherewithal to pay, and I almost believe him.[4]

Now, notwithstanding his abuse of him to Batt, he was going out of his way to praise him to others, as for instance in his letter to Greverade:

> The rest you will know from the person who hands this to you, Augustine Caminade, a man most learned and intimate with me, who has taught the humanities, as they are called, at Paris with the greatest success. Take him to your heart as you are wont to do, for he is indeed worthy of your affection.[5]

[3] *Ibid.*, 133. [4] *Ibid.*, 135. [5] *Ibid.*, 141.

Meanwhile to Augustine himself, this robber, this scoundrel, he sends the following illuminating letter at the same period:

The tidings that you send me concerning Andrelini, Gaguin, and Aemilius are cheerful and pleasant, although no news to me. And yet they are just as acceptable as if they were new. For why should I not highly esteem the good will of such men towards me, which is so weighty a recommendation for me? So, too, I have always willingly acknowledged your zeal for my fame, and praise it anew. That hyperbolic style of Andrelini's in which he dubs me the sacred shrine of literature did not please me so much, since such immoderate praise is proper neither for my modesty nor for my mediocrity, besides the fact that such figures of speech are generally insincere and provocative of criticism. In the last analysis they are closely related to irony, just as those flattering remarks in your last letter are; and yet they do not flatter me in the least. "Most admirable preceptor, I give myself to you as your most devoted disciple; command me as you will, I have nothing of my own, everything that I have is yours," and all that kind of talk I deem to be as far remote as possible from genuine good will. For where there is perfect love, such as I opine exists between us two, what is the use of figures of speech? Moreover, where there is an insincere regard, such figures of speech are wont to lead one into a suspicion of ill will. Therefore you will do me a great favor if you entirely omit those courteous hyperboles from your letters, and allow your sincere love its own mode of expression, remembering that you are writing to a very dear friend and not to a tyrant. That the fates even now are responding malignantly to your wishes, and even to your deserts, to me is indeed more grievous than could be imagined, but I am glad that they are beginning to be more kind. For truly, unless my mind is much deceived, a new calm will follow this deadly storm. You must only hold out, dear Augustine, as you always do,

contraque audentior ito
Quam tua te fortuna sinet.

I glean from your letter that Paulus Aemilius is about to rejoin us here, but I would much rather that he remain where he is, for indeed I do not see why I should stay here any longer. But see that you write me about your entire present position, that is, whether your little treasury will bear the slight burden of my support, since you do not wish me to doubt your good will; nor can I, since it has already been tested and tried in so many perils and trials. Wherefore, if there is any reason why I might seem an inopportune or inconvenient guest, you will let me know it without disguise, using the freedom which our friendship demands, and I will not love you a grain the less. May the powers above so love me, that I do not consider so much how I may advance my own interests (although I do look out for them also, why should I deny it?) as that my most earnest attention may be given to your neglected studies, as you yourself have said; so if your intention is the same, nay, rather, if

your pocket will permit, that my convenience may be in accord with yours, summon me; but, if not, it is of the utmost importance for me to know, that I may hasten to look out for myself in some other way, even though the former plan is preferable. For with whom would I rather share my studies than with you whom I first introduced to good literature, in whose company I recalled myself to my studies when they were almost abandoned, and with whom I have lived so intimately for so many years? But if you are not able to do what you wish, you must then wish for what you are able to do.

There appears some slight hope of my going to Italy, and my mind is somewhat eager for it; but as soon as I receive your reply I will decide on my plans. Give my kindest regards to Nicholas Bensrott who, you say, has sent his best wishes to me. I am hurrying on my *Copia,* but I think the Muses are hostile. For what of merit can I acomplish, destitute as I am of all good books? And the task seems greater in perspective than it did at the first glance. And yet I will attempt it, for what else can I do? In truth I work at it lest I should do nothing at all; and that would be a most disgraceful thing. Take care of your health, dear Augustine, and love me as ever. Dated at Orléans, the day after the Conception of the Virgin Mother. December 9, 1500.[6]

And in this way matters went on for another six months, at the end of which period we find another letter from him to Augustine, in which he admits, in his usually abject manner, his offenses against Augustine. Evidently the latter had become soured, and, though he did not absolutely abandon Erasmus, yet it is plain to be seen that his enthusiasm for him perceptibly waned from this time on. To be suspected, abused, and lied about, was sufficient to discourage any man; and indeed it was a very poor return to Augustine after all he had done for him.

Of my regard for you you can learn from the letter which I left for you. I am scarcely yet settled down with Batt, after two months of almost constant travel. Frequent rumors are borne hither that the plague is raging all around you. So, if you deem it best for your interests to migrate hither, you will find a full explanation from what I have therein written. Do not suspect my leaving there was connected with ill feeling or desire to deceive. May I die if I have ever very unwillingly left Paris hitherto; but the frequent funerals simply terrified me. Now, if on account of my former offenses some suspicion dwells in your mind, put me to the test, and I will make you feel that you are as much loved by me as hitherto I may have seemed cold. I was never able to learn during my whole trip whether you had returned or not, a fact which both grieved and surprised me. At last a certain Anthony said that he had heard of someone who had seen and met you at Lübeck, adducing as proof that he had given you the *Elegantiæ* of Laurentius Valla, which I had formerly made into a compendium. And up to

[6] *Ibid.*, 136.

the present, I know not whether the rumor that you have returned to Paris is true or false. For that reason I wrote you very briefly and very carelessly, not wishing to run the risk of wasting my efforts. If you have indeed returned, compose a letter as long as possible for me about your whole journey and the rest of your adventures. I desire very much to be remembered to your friend Rudolph, for many reasons; and give my kind regards to Nicholas and the rest of your pupils to whom I am under obligations. As for yourself, take care of your health. Should you flee hither, although I can scarcely hope for it, I promise you nothing in words, but I will do in deeds all that is due to a man who is so full of good will and affection for me. St. Omer, July 15, 1501.[7]

To those who held rank or station, or whose position in the world promised patronage or financial support, Erasmus could be most subservient; but to those who were, like himself, scantily endowed with worldly wealth, he could be most arrogant. This was Augustine's fault in the eyes of Erasmus: he was poor. Yet Augustine had a tremendous admiration for his "preceptor," as he was proud to call him, though he himself was no mean scholar. But he allowed himself to be made a slave to his exacting master, and in spite of his admiration and affection for him he often found his task distasteful and his master ungrateful. It was principally by his efforts that Erasmus sold his books, and was thus able to maintain himself. There were no booksellers in the modern sense of the term, and books had to be sold almost entirely by personal application. This was facilitated by the giving of a public lecture or reading in order to advertise the merits of the new work, and to descant on the ability or personality of its author. This was the task which Augustine had assumed for his friend Erasmus, and a man filling a position of this kind was called an "interpreter." Incidentally he had performed the same office for Christian Northoff's *Letters,* as also for the *Sylua odarum* of William Herman. As one can readily see, this was a most important function, and one which an author could not so effectually perform for himself. Augustine had the essential and requisite qualifications for the position, and his like could not be easily found. Erasmus knew this well and, though his mind was torn with unworthy suspicions of Augustine's honesty, he clung to him like a helpless child, and never seemed happy when Augustine was away from him. And yet in view of these facts we find with surprise that he could write to William Herman in the following cold-blooded strain:

Your interpreter Augustine has long since separated from me; he uses me artfully, and I treat him in kind. There is no genuine affection between us, and never was, so great is the difference in our minds. He will be with you in a short time; so do you also treat the fellow with craft. Defer to him before others, and treat him with as much distinction as possible; if he says anything in your praise, listen to it, for he will never be seen there again. Hence for your own sake do the fellow some honor, for in a way he deserves

[7] *Ibid.,* 156.

it. He gave a public lecture here on your poems, and that gratuitously. Give him thanks, but give him nothing else, especially of those things which may be of use to me.[8]

Augustine had yet to learn that hardest of all lessons, that "supple knees feed arrogance," and for fully two years afterwards he continued to serve Erasmus faithfully and, we may assume, profitably; for in July, 1500, we find that "Augustine is giving public readings from the *Adages* to crowded houses." [9]

To make an end of this matter, which furnishes unpleasant reading to lovers of Erasmus, but which is necessary to a proper understanding of his mental characteristics, we will give the few main facts in the life of Augustine that have survived the rust of time. Allen with his usual pains has ascertained that "Erasmus received support from him, and in return gave him instruction, and wrote treatises which Augustine regarded as payment." An edition of Vergil was also published by him in 1498, and he corrected the *Adages* of 1500 and 1505 for Philippi's press. In 1502 he went to Orléans University to study law, was honored by being elected to the position of secretary of the town of Middleburg, and was later sent as that town's ambassador to Scotland. This does not seem to be the type of man who would lend himself to the dishonest practices with which Erasmus has damned his memory. We are forced to the belief that Erasmus used such men as Augustine as props on which to lean in his progress up to fame, to be discarded as soon as they were of no further use or profit. The process seems heartless, but has been a common one amongst literary men both before and since Erasmus' time. That our subject was glaringly ungrateful is made manifest by the fact that he never wrote a letter displaying sincere and heartfelt gratitude to any man; or if he did, it has not come down to us among the thousands of letters which he left us. None could be more profuse in expressions of thanks and personal compliment; but we always miss the note of sincerity and genuineness.

But to return to Batt, who had probably by this time discovered his friend's unamiable weaknesses and unworthy suspicions, and whose present state of angry indifference Erasmus was striving so hard to change. Erasmus was profuse in excuses, explanation, and protestations of sincerity; but Batt probably felt that he protested too much. Erasmus has not left us a single letter of either Batt or Augustine, so we may fairly conclude that they contained unpalatable truths which must have made the great man wince. Batt in particular must have held up the mirror in which he might see his insincerity, for in almost every letter he found it necessary to explain his actions, or cry Batt for mercy. We need read but one paragraph of the following letter:

I will not ask you to love me, for you cannot love me any more ardently than you do now; nor that you look out for my interests, for you place them before your own; nor that in caring for my affairs you manifest your fidelity and zeal, for in these matters you

[8] *Ibid.*, 81. [9] *Ibid.*, 128.

excel myself; but I ask of you the easiest thing of all, but which to me is of the greatest importance, namely, that you will not deem that the matters which I enter into minutely in relation to my affairs are written in a specious manner, or with artful intent, the better to insure my own advantage. If in an idle moment I have either indulged in a joke, or feigned something as the case required, such things, dear Batt, have their place. Now matters are in such case that there is no time for joking, and there is no reason why I should lie. May the divine powers grant to us both so to grow old in mutual affection, and the memory of our pure love so to dwell as long as possible in the remembrance of posterity, that I have introduced nothing into these letters which was not in entire consonance with the feelings of my heart. For what is there which I could not safely or ought not willingly to communicate to you, who are my own mind, in a way of speaking? Hence I beg of you, dear Batt, not to regard anything I write to you in the light of a pretense, since I utter it in a more serious manner than either of us could wish, lest indeed I should recall to your memory the vagrant whom Horace mentions; and though my leg be really broken, I should be laughed at by all and assisted by none. If I can persuade you to do this, I know that you will look out for the other things.[10]

But Batt was not so easily to be appeased, if we may judge by the next letter that Erasmus wrote him:

I am surprised that you are still suspicious that in what I write you I am using duplicity, that is, that I am not candid and sincere but deceitful and dissimulating. I wish, dearest Batt, that you would learn from me once for all that nothing is so hateful to me as hypocrisy, that I never use pretense in dealing with my friends, and that I take no pleasure in the fictions of others. I did instruct you, when writing you from England, to get me away from there by a feigned letter; yet that deception was not intended for you, for you were not deceived, but for the Englishman. Moreover, may I die if I was not sincere in writing the letter which I afterwards sent you explaining my purpose.

Many exculpatory sentences to the same effect follow, which it is not necessary to discuss here; but, after easing his mind on the matter, he goes on in a different strain to speak of other things:

Although I do not doubt, dearest Batt, that whatever you do you do out of the most loving kindness, yet I beseech you to display your whole Battic personality in seeking to make me happy. You will accomplish this without doubt, provided that you concentrate that lucky mind of yours on this matter. Straightway dispatch Louis to my Lady and, if convenient, do you yourself by your eloquence help my letter to go forward. Urge Adolphus to entreat his mother's attention, through the influence of his first prayers, but take care that he asks for nothing trifling; for by the same effort I might

[10] *Ibid.*, 138.

move her to give me something worth while. If the fortunes of your Erasmus are really next your heart, do as I have asked. You will excuse my delicacy to my Lady in gracious words, by saying that my disposition is such that I cannot bear to disclose to her in person my poverty. But you will write her that I am in the deepest poverty, for the reason that this flight to Orléans was a great expense to me, since I had to leave those things from which I derived considerable funds. Nor can I properly receive the title of D.D. except in Italy; nor can a man in delicate health go to Italy without a large sum of money; especially as on account of my reputation for learning it would not be proper for me to live there in any shabby manner. You will show her how much greater honor I am going to bring on her by my writings than those other theologians whom she assists. For they preach only of what is commonplace, while I write what will live forever. They are heard in one or two churches discoursing on unlearned trifles; my books will be read by both Latins and Greeks throughout the entire world. Tell her of the great crowds of uncultured divines that can be found everywhere; while such a man as I am can scarcely be found in many centuries; unless perchance you are so scrupulous that to tell a few fibs for a friend would be a matter of conscience with you. Then you will show her that she will be none the poorer if she were to help me with a few gold pieces, so that the true text of Jerome might be restored, and real theology revived, especially when so much of her wealth is being shamefully squandered.

Having enlarged on these matters according to your taste, and written of my character, my hopes, my regard for her Ladyship, and my exceeding modesty, you will then add that I wrote you that I was in great need of two hundred francs, which would be a present payment of my next year's salary; and that is the exact truth, Batt. For to visit Italy with one hundred francs, and part of this sum already spent, does not seem to me a safe procedure, unless I should be willing to bind myself again to the service of someone, and I would rather die than do that. Then that it matters very little to her whether she gives me what I ask for now or in a year from now; but that to me it matters greatly. Then persuade her to look up some church benefice for me, in order that when I return I may have some abode wherein I can quietly settle down to writing. Not only will you persuade her to this, but also show her the very best reason you can why she should promise me the first from the many within her gift, if not the best, at least a tolerable one, which I can change when a better falls out. I am aware that there are many who seek these benefices; but you will tell her that I am a man such that, if she compare me with all the others, etc. You know your ancient custom of lying roundly for Erasmus. See too that your Adolphus writes her to the same effect, you dictating for his use the most flattering entreaties. Also see to it right away that the promise of the hundred francs be ratified, and this fact communicated to Adolphus, if possible, so that if any mischance carry off the

mother (which God forbid) I can collect it from the son. You should add, finally, that I have complained in my letters, as Jerome often complained in his, that study has destroyed my eyesight, and that like Jerome I must begin to study with my ears and tongue; and so persuade her with the wittiest speeches you can muster to send me a sapphire or other gem useful for strengthening the sight. I would describe for you what gems have this quality if I had my Pliny handy; but you can elicit that from your physician.

These things, my dear James, seem to me neither excessive nor hopeless of attainment, if you will only exert that resolution which is always so fortunate for me. And at this time especially it seems to me that opportunity should be seized by the forelock, when such an honorable chance is offered. I beseech you, dear Batt, again and again to ponder on this, for such is our friendship that, if either was able to be of service to the other, even at his own serious inconvenience, he should not refuse; now, when it is a question of obtaining an emolument for Erasmus, whom you have ever excelled even in affection, and with no inconvenience whatever to you, to deny your help in such a matter seems to me not only unfriendly, but positively hostile. Nor should any such anxiety as the following disturb your mind: "If my Lady grants this, with what pretext shall I ask for the things which I must request her for myself?" I know indeed that you also stand in great need of my Lady's generosity; but reflect that both our needs cannot be met at one and the same time. Now, when the opportunity is offered, attend to your friend's affairs and defer your own; you can attend to your own in its turn, and do it none the less conveniently. And do not consider that such a trifling matter will exhaust my Lady's purse; and remember at the same time that you have the opportunity of proffering your request every day, while I have not.

Perchance you think that I am doing very well if I escape the necessity of begging my daily bread. But I indeed feel this way about it, that I must either abandon my career entirely, or what the literary life requires must by some means or other be obtained. And such an occupation demands a style of living not wholly sordid and miserable; yet how far from beggary was I, and am I, when I have not a crown in my purse? The rest is shameful to write about. See how many asses there are with no learning at all who possess wealth; and does it seem a great achievement to you if Erasmus is kept from starvation? What, too, if sickness comes, since my fever recurs almost yearly; what if many other things happen which are wont to occur in the life of man, as you yourself know? What have I got from my Lady up to this but promises? "But you lost your money in England," you will say, "not indeed by your fault, but neither was it by my fault that you lost it." I did not go to England without design, nor did I attempt to leave it without due consideration, and the mishaps of life are not within our control.

In faith, I am likewise surprised at your insisting that I am sending nothing at all to you, as if I were either hiding from you

what might be sent, or that I was so fast asleep that I need someone to prod me. Believe me, there is no idleness here, nor scarcely a due regard for my health, while I work for my friends, composing for these, reading proofs for those, and correcting for others; while for myself I also read, collect references, correct the letter-press, work at composition, and apply myself to unraveling the difficulties of Greek literature. And then, measuring my leisure by your own, you cry out, "Write a book for this person, or indite six hundred letters!"—as if I had a mind of adamant. I suppose that such things seem very easy to you that have never sweated over tasks of this kind. Try for yourself what it is to write a book, and then accuse me of sloth if you think proper.

You admit into your letter a few things which you consider humorous, but which I regard as abusive, or, at least, out of place. Let us abstain, my dearest James, I beg you, from these sallies, which savor more of mockery than of wit. If it suits us occasionally to enjoy ourselves with a few learned jokes, let us make such a use of them in our conversations when the occasion warrants them, that they will hinder neither of us from attending to the main thing. And I beseech you by our friendship not to let it enter your mind to try whether I could be brought to cast away from me this ambition of mine, which is indeed the only thing left me; or whether we should diminish our delightful affection by inopportune jesting. I think of nothing else in the depths of my soul than the obtaining for myself as much learning as possible, and hence I despise that which is commonplace intensely. For I have seen, yes, long ago, the folly of the multitude. My books will not waft me into fame at once; but I prefer my glory to be lasting, even though a little late, rather than earlier but of the sort that one regrets; and that is what I notice has happened to quite a number. Therefore I beg you to let me manage this matter in my own way. Neither effort nor will shall be lacking on my side; see to it that material assistance shall not be entirely wanting to me; a result that you can bring about without inconveniencing yourself, and possibly to your own profit. Nor do I write thus deeming that you need any urging, but only to show that it needs your deepest attention. From people of rank nothing petty should be requested, and there is nothing that you might not honorably attempt for a friend; and trust me, if you go about it prudently, you will succeed. But if you lack courage entirely, do not feed me up with vain hopes, but suffer me to look around for other expectations.

You know I do not mean to be harsh, dear Batt, in what I have said; and you will take it in good part as being written in all sincerity. For in a serious matter serious language must be used. Listen besides to what I wish you to attempt, in order to wrest some gift from the Abbot. You know the nature of the fellow. Think up some modest and flattering reason for begging from him. Say that I am undertaking a great work: for instance, the restoring of the entire text of Jerome, debased, mutilated, and mixed up as it

has been by the ignorance of theologians (for I have discovered much in his writings that is false and spurious); and I will restore the Greek text. I will explain the ancient customs and handicrafts, which I dare say have never hitherto been understood. For such a task I need many books, as also the assistance of learned Greeks, in which matter I could be much assisted by a gift. You would be telling no lie either, for I am going to attempt all this.

Now, should you receive any considerable sum from my Lady, as I hope you will, send Louis to me at once. But if she gives only ten or twelve crowns, or nothing, detain Louis; but give to John anything that may have to be brought to me, unless perchance some other servant volunteers for the journey. Louis himself knows on what day John will be in Zeeland. About the suit of clothes concerning which you write so contemptuously, do as seems best to you. However, it seems foolish to me to keep a servant and not to clothe him. To beg trifles of this kind from my Lady does not please me greatly; but, as I have said, do as you like. If you do not receive as much as you wish from my Lady, see that a few crowns at least may be dispatched to me, together with your own money. A great dearth of books, no leisure, poor health; go you and write books under such conditions.

I see little certainty of the whereabouts of our messenger John. Therefore decide for yourself whether or not you desire Louis to return hither; but in any case be sure that you do not send him to me without a few gold pieces. Hasten, I beg of you, Batt. Give Louis the books belonging to Augustine to carry to Veere to our most loving Thomas, so that, if the servant sell some of them on his journey, Thomas can send the remainder by some safe water carriage to Gouda for N. [Werner], who may be able to distribute them partly in his own locality, and may send a part of them as soon as possible to Haarlem for William to distribute. And I will write by the messenger.

Farewell, my best and dearest Batt, and in this matter exert your whole self whom I call a friend and not an idler. Orléans, December 12, 1500.[11]

These letters which he wrote to Batt are without doubt of extreme importance, not only for the information they give us on other matters, but especially for the light that they shed on his own character. As is evident to even a casual reader, he bares his inmost soul to Batt, but is hardly conscious that he is making a very bad impression on his friend. This is characteristic of all egoists, since their thoughts are so self-centred that they lose all sense of what is proper and dignified. The selfishness of Erasmus was temperamental. He never tried to hide it, for it was like that of a child, naïve, artless, and entirely unaffected. The fact that Batt had a family to support did not prevent Erasmus from urging him to push the latter's claims with the Lady of Veere in preference to Batt's own needs, which were perhaps as imperative as

[11] *Ibid.*, 139.

those of Erasmus. And when his real friends and acquaintances did not immediately respond to the importunate and incessant demands which he made on them, he deemed himself a most abused and unappreciated man, and hesitated not a whit to tell them as much. Emerton seems to have been the first of his biographers to perceive these qualities in Erasmus, and to have the courage to go counter to the conventional estimate of his character in writing of his peculiarities.

> He was continually on the move, now at Paris, now at Orléans, again in the Low Countries, visiting this friend and that, with no regular source of income, yet somehow pulling himself through. During all this time there is hardly a letter which does not speak of him as the victim of a cruel fate. Of course it is always the fault of someone else, but human nature has not so greatly changed in four hundred years that we can afford to take his word for it that all his patrons had deserted him with no cause whatever on his part. To get the proper perspective for an understanding of the situation we must remind ourselves that Erasmus was as yet a very doubtful investment. His real individuality was hardly showing itself. He had positively rejected all proposals of regular occupation; he was making considerable demands on life, but he would take life only on his own terms. . . . The Bishop of Cambrai had long since failed him. The Bishop's brother, the Abbot of St. Bertin, formerly a great friend, was of no use; the Marchioness was herself in some mysterious trouble; Battus alone, his precious Battus, was quite true to him, but not able to do much for him. Altogether it seems most probable that the conspiracy of the fates against our scholar may have been nothing more than a common feeling of distrust towards a sturdy beggar, who had not yet proved his value, and who was not inclined to put up with any half-way charity.[12]

It was exactly as Emerton states: all men whom he met, or with whom he could strike up a correspondence, were regarded as possible sources of assistance or revenue. He made a direct request on the Marchioness of Veere about this time, and by the tone in which he has pitched it we may surmise how precarious was the state of his finances. To have been compelled to bend his lofty muse to the harsh necessity of begging succor from her Ladyship was certainly humiliating enough; but in this, as in every other action of his life, he sought to show that he was no common beggar; and the letter which he sent her is a masterpiece of veiled flattery and courtly sycophancy, couched in the most learned and flowery of phrases:

> Erasmus of Rotterdam to the Most Illustrious Anna Borselen, Princess of Veere.
>
> The literature of the ancients has preserved for us the names of three Annas—the one whose surname was Perenna, whom the ancients believed to have been translated to heaven on account of her wonderfully loving care for her sister Dido; a second who was

[12] *Desiderius Erasmus,* pp. 94-95.

the wife of Elkannah, of whom it is praise enough to state that in old age, by the grace of God, she brought forth Samuel, not for her own service, but as a most holy priest for God, and a most honorable judge for the people; and the third was the parent of the Virgin Mother and the grandparent of Jesus God and Man, so that she indeed needs no other praise. The Roman Muses consecrated to immortality the first of these. The annals of the Hebrews have ennobled with great praise the second. Christian piety offers prayers to the third, celebrated by the eloquent pen of Rudolph Agricola and Baptista of Mantua. Oh! that now by my pen I might serve to make posterity know that kind, pure, and chaste heart of yours, and place you as a fourth Anna with the other three. And it would certainly come to pass, could my poor talent only correspond with your virtues.

And indeed I am led to think that it was not without design, as Vergil says, nor without heavenly direction, that this name fell to you, so many things do I see in you in common with them. They were most noble; but what more illustrious does this kingdom possess than your ancestors? They were famous for their goodness; your goodness is most pleasing to heaven. They were afflicted with the greatest misfortunes which they bore with the greatest patience; something which you have in common with them, more indeed than I could wish. For your integrity and virgin innocence, I must say it, were deserving of perpetual felicity. But what can you do? That is the old game of fortune, to exalt the unworthy and to maltreat the innocent. But you, my patroness, for a glorious example,

ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito
Quam tua te fortuna sinat.

But though, on account of the exceeding love, or rather filial affection, which I bear you (for I owe all my well-being to you by whose kindness I am enabled to follow a literary career, without the which I could not live at all), I feel your misfortunes very keenly; yet this thought gives me great relief, that such troubles are frequently sent by a kind Providence, not to overwhelm us, but to supply us with subject and material for exercising our virtue, so that it may shine out more and more splendidly. Thus did the virtue of Hercules, Aeneas, and Ulysses shine forth; thus did the patience of Job receive the seal of approbation.

Therefore I feel not so much grief at the fact that misfortunes assail you, as I feel rejoiced that you bear up so well under them. And I have often marveled how, I will not say patiently, but even cheerfully, you bear them; so that, to speak frankly, I, a man almost born to misfortune, encourage myself more by your example than by that of any of those of ancient times; and as a matter of fact I have been making my way for a whole year against adverse winds, opposing tides, and a stormy sky. It happens also in some manner (for why should I not own it to you?), since among mortals a fellowship in misfortunes promotes friendship, that I love you

more particularly for this reason, because I consider that the goddess of justice, whom I have always found to be most unjust to me, has been far from just to you. Although where is the similarity? Your noble rank is almost beyond the hazard of Fortune, and yet at times she pinches you; but against me she constantly rages, in this alone unlike herself, that it might seem that she had conspired against my literary labors.

It has occurred to me as I write this letter (for to whom could I better disclose my misfortune than to her who alone can and will remedy it?)—it has occurred to me, I say, that to-day is the anniversary of the shipwreck of my little fortune, the fruit of my efforts, on the shores of Britain; from which time up to this very hour, as I remember, Fate has exposed me to a constant succession of misfortunes, one after another. For as soon as the British Charybdis had cast me up naked on our shores, a fierce storm assailed me, necessitating a very toilsome journey, during which my throat was in danger from the daggers of robbers, after which came a fever, and then the pestilence which put me to flight but did not infect me. Add to these things the domestic cares which are so numerous in the daily life of mortals. But God knows, it somewhat shames me, that I, a man fortified by the sustaining influence of learning and armed with the precepts of philosophy, should ever be cast down, when you whom Nature formed to be a woman, whom indulgent Fortune placed in the highest rank of society, and whom she reared in the greatest luxury, have troubles to bear, and bear them in a manner not at all womanish. So, too, I am somewhat ashamed of my dejection, since I had decided that no matter how Fortune raged at me, there was no reason why I should abandon literature and feel broken in spirit while you, as a most assuring guiding star, brightened my path. For not even Fortune can take my learning from me; while the little money that my leisure requires, your wealth, which is as abundant as your good will, can easily supply. You owe it to Fortune that you are able to do this; and I owe it to your good will that you desire, and desire willingly, to aid me in the developing of my literary powers, which are solely dependent on you, look to you, and are consecrated to you alone. Alexander the Great supported Cherylus, a writer, according to Lucilius, bad and unfeeling. The untiring kindness of Maecenas lightened the poverty of Vergil and Horace; the affection of Vespasian stimulated the lucubrations of Pliny; the refined taste of the Emperor Gratianus honored the semi-Greek muse of Ausonius with the Roman consulship; the high-mindedness of Paula and Eustochium cherished the pious eloquence of Jerome. Recently, too, Lorenzo de'Medici sent forth Politian, the delight of this age, after having educated him in the bosom of his own family; and not to continue to count the sands of the seashore, as the Greek proverb says, every man of genius found his Maecenas.

Nor do they seem to me to have made an ungrateful return to their patrons, whose memories they have enshrined forever in their

writings. But I, dear patroness, would not willingly exchange you for any Maecenas or Caesar; and as for making a return to you, with what little talent I possess I will strive with all my might that future ages shall know who was my Maecenas, and shall marvel that in this remote part of the world there existed a woman who, by her benefactions, showed an eager desire to revive learning, corrupted as it is by the stupidity of the ignorant, ruined by the vices of princes, and neglected by the indifference of the multitude; a woman who would not allow the humble literary powers of Erasmus, lacking splendid patrons, plundered by a tyrant, battered by all the mischances of Fortune, to perish of want. Continue as you have begun; my writings, your own children, hold out suppliant hands to you and beseech you, by your own vicissitudes of fortune, which, when good, you deprecate in a most praiseworthy manner, and, when bad, you bear with greatness of soul, and by their own constant misfortunes, under which they bear up only by the assistance of your patronage, and by the love of early theology, that excellent Queen, whom the divinely inspired Psalmist, speaking by the mouth of Jerome, declares to be standing on the right hand of the Eternal King—not soiled and tattered as she is now to be seen in the schools of the Sophists, but clad in golden raiment and colors of richest hue, and for the rescuing of whom I have wholly devoted my energy and my sleepless nights—that you will never forsake them.

I have felt for some time past that two things are very necessary to me: first, that I should visit Italy in order that the little learning I have may acquire some prestige from the celebrity of that country; and second, that I may receive the title of D.D., both of which objects are foolish. For, as Horace says, "those who cross the sea do not straightway change their character"; nor will the empty bauble of a great title make me a jot more learned. Yet as times are, you must follow custom, when now not only to the common people alone, but even to the learned, no one is considered educated unless he is dubbed Master, notwithstanding the prohibition of Christ, the King of Theologians. And, indeed, in former days no man was held to be learned because he had purchased the title of Doctor, but those only were styled Doctors who gave a convincing specimen of their erudition by publishing books. But as I have said, it is vain to give a fine dramatic exhibition which everyone hisses. Therefore I must needs put on the lion's skin, by which means I can bring assurance to those who judge a man by his title and not by his books (which probably they do not understand) that I really have some learning. Those are the men who, having absorbed some pseudo-science, and having been taught at great expense indeed to know nothing, without skill, and almost without common sense, but Great God! with what stubbornness and pride, because forsooth of their empty title, have most falsely assumed the reputation of being men of consummate learning. Retailing all the trash of kitchen talk, they defile with their dirty noses the parasites Philoxenus

and Gnatho, those disgraceful gluttons, by which means they obtain possession of things for themselves alone, men of nobler tastes being deterred by nausea. With such monsters as these must I contend and prove myself another Hercules. Wherefore, if you will arm your Erasmus that he may fight with these monstrosities, both with courage and reputation, not only I, but learning also, will be indebted to you. I must be armed, my princess, with the weapons of the Homeric Glaucus, with those which he gave, however, and not with those he received. What this enigma means you will learn from the letter of my friend Batt, to whom I have disclosed my condition without reserve. I have cast off all shame, contrary to my custom and character, as well as contrary to the chaste reserve of literature; but, as it is said, "Necessity is a cruel weapon." I have sent you a hymn, or rather, verses, written by me to St. Anne in my boyhood (for even from my earliest infancy I burned with an ardent love of that saint), and thus in a way I am sending you to yourself, Anna to Anna. I send, moreover, certain prayers, by means of which magical incantations you will be able to charm from the skies, even against her will, so to speak, not the moon, but her who brought forth the Sun of Justice; although she is wont to be most complaisant, when, being herself a virgin, she is called upon by virgin supplications. For I place you indeed not so much among the widows as among the virgins, since you were married when yet a girl, partly to please your parents, and partly to raise an heir to your race; and such was the nature of your consortship that it must not be considered so much a matter of pleasure as of patience. That now in your flourishing prime, when still almost a girl, no urging of princes can force you from your resolution of chastity, that in such affluent fortunes you indulge yourself not at all, this I consider not widowhood but virginity; in the which course if you persevere, as I trust you will, I will boldly number you not with the choir of maidens who as the Scripture says cannot be numbered, not with the eighty concubines of Solomon, but with the fifty queens, with, I feel sure, the full approbation of Jerome himself.

I have for some time had in hand a work entitled *On Epistles,* and likewise one entitled *On the Varying of Discourse,* both destined to help the studies of your son Adolphus; besides these I have another entitled *On Literature,* which is to be dedicated to yourself. If these shall appear later than I could wish, do not blame my tardiness, but rather my ill fortune, or impute it, if you prefer, to the difficulty of the subjects treated; for to publish poor books is a most silly thing, and to produce good ones is more difficult by far. Farewell, and hold my Muses in your special regard. Dated at Paris, January 27, 1501.[18]

As a biographer Froude is very often loose in his assertions, and we feel that a citation of his authorities would go far towards helping us

[18] Eras. Ep. 145.

to accept some of his statements. But, in spite of the fact that he does not give his references for proof of what he affirms below, we feel that we may safely accept it, knowing what we already do of Erasmus' mode of life. He says:

> Meanwhile, he could not keep his expenses within the limits to which poor scholars have generally to confine themselves. A certain style of easy living was essential to his existence. He required good, well-warmed rooms, good horses to ride, good servants to wait upon him, and good wine to drink; and to supply all this he had no regular income at all except scanty fees from pupils. . . . But he was an irritable, careless mortal—negligent, and therefore always falling into misfortunes. The money which he made by his books went into wrong hands. The Dover accident was but one of many. He was robbed (or so he thought) by his publishers, robbed by his servants, robbed at country inns. . . . Was ever scholar so hard bestead? The sorrows of Erasmus might make a fresh chapter in the "Calamities of Men of Genius." Obviously he had money enough if he had known how to take care of it. His friends might well hesitate before they filled a purse which had no bottom to it. . . . But make what deductions we please on that score, modesty was not one of Erasmus' faults, nor gratitude on an exaggerated scale.[14]

The above statements are probably the truth; and we ought not to be surprised when we hear that the Marchioness of Veere, Batt, and others of his financial supporters occasionally grew tired of serving him. We have another letter to Batt, of even date with the one to the Marchioness just given, which we must transcribe here, because it is in a way a peep behind the scenes which Erasmus inadvertently grants us:

> That parasite delivered to me your last letter, which was in no respect any the less absurd and rude than your former one. Either I am much mistaken, or some evil genius who envies us our friendship is striving to part us two that have been living in such pleasant and loving intimacy. This shall never be brought about by any fault of mine; see that you do not bring it to pass.
>
> In the first place, what need was there for Louis to come here, as if he were bringing me a thousand nobles instead of eight francs? Could not this little sum have been sent by someone else? Then, when you did send it, why did you deem it necessary to retain something from such an insignificant amount? Was it lest I, becoming wealthy, might forget my obligations, or that there were a few gold pieces of a surplus, by means of which you might send another messenger here again? For what you object to concerning the letters, believe me, without the letters the whole matter could have just as conveniently been accomplished, providing your zeal had not been lacking, and you could just as well have requested the letters through someone else; nor will you ever realize how much inconvenience this going back has caused. My fever has only

[14] *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, pp. 52, 60-62.

left me three or four months out of the whole year in which to study; and now there is need of great effort. Concerning the *De epistolis* which I was getting into shape some time ago, I was revising it, or rather, getting it printed. I had laid down for myself a task sufficiently hard and laborious, when here comes your letter filled with reproaches, and with the trifle of money not even intact, which thing so upset me that I threw down what I had in my hands, and would have sent back the young man without a reply had not James Tutor by much persuasion induced me to change my mind.

May I die if I ever wrote anything in my life before so repugnant to my mind as those trifles, yea, those Gnathonisms, which I wrote to my Lady, to the Provost, and to the Abbot. Now you will accuse me of bad temper, I know; but you will not do so, Batt, if you reflect on my position rightly, and at the same time consider how hard it is to incite one's mind to the task of writing a great work, and how harder still it is to centre the mind, now burning with ardor, on such trifles as those. Because you have never tried this sort of thing you think my mind is always fresh and responsive, just as yours is in your absolute leisure. Do you not know that there is no fatigue like that of a mind worn out by writing? Do you not deem that it is incumbent on me to make a return to those whose favors I enjoy? Then again you demand great quantities of my literary efforts; but you do not mind whether I get the leisure which the writing of such works requires. Finally, it does not suffice you that I shall render our friendship and the munificence of my Lady illustrious by the books which I shall some day produce, but I must write six hundred letters daily.

A year has already elapsed since the money was promised me, and in the meantime you hold out in your letter nothing but pure hope. You say, "I do not despair," "I will plead your cause skilfully," and talk of that sort; all of which is dinned into my ears so often that it makes me sick. Then again you deplore her Ladyship's misfortune. To my way of thinking you are sick with another's disease. If she neglects her affairs, need you feel solicitous? If she dallies and trifles with her friend N., need you be angry? Has she nothing left to give? I see this one thing plainly, that, if she gives nothing now for such reasons as these, she will never give anything in future, because such excuses are never lacking to the great. Were she to give me the trifling sum of two hundred francs, to be counted in with the immense amount that she is dissipating, I suppose it would be a matter of great moment? She has the wherewithal to support those cowled lechers, those scoundrelly idlers—you know whom I mean—and has she not enough to maintain in leisure a man who may write books worthy of posterity, if I may be permitted to boast a little about myself? She has fallen into many difficulties, no doubt, but by her own fault; since she preferred to attach to her skirts that handsome popinjay rather than some grave and sedate personage, as was becoming to her sex and age. And I foresee much greater ills for her than

these, unless she changes her decision; although I do not want to write uncharitably about her, for I love her, as well I may, since she has been very good to me.

But what difference, I ask you, would it make to her fortune if I were to get two hundred francs? Why, she would not remember it seven hours afterwards. It all comes to this, that the money must be dragged out of her, if not personally, then through her banker, so that I might draw it here in Paris. You have already written her many letters on the subject, in all of which you mention, suggest, and hint. What can be more useless? You should have watched for the best opportunity which offered and, after having arranged the preliminaries skilfully, then have vigorously pressed the matter to a conclusion; now at this late hour it is still to be done. May I die, if you would not have accomplished the thing perfectly, had you gone about it courageously. You should be a little bolder in behalf of a friend, when you are doing it by reason of my diffidence. You must decide for yourself how much of this affair should be disclosed to N. Now, before you set out or dispatch anyone, send me by some sure hand the rest of the gold pieces, and, if I might make the request, add four or five of your own to the amount, so that I may not be in want while awaiting some of my Lady's money. See how this little sum has dribbled away. I had eight francs, got from the exchange of the angels; from these the messenger deducted two, or a little less. Not to mention at present the food, there remain, you say, two angels, from which he who brings them must necessarily deduct something. That youth John whom you sent to England has run away, not without stealing from us, or I am much mistaken. Augustine has taken horse to Orléans in pursuit of him, so I look forward to all sorts of trouble there.

Farewell, dear Batt, and take in good part what I have written, not excitedly or hysterically, but as is proper to a man who of all my friends is the most genuinely devoted to me. Please treat Louis not like that buffoon Adrian who can do us no harm, but as a person of more brains, and who may be very useful to us in many ways by and by. He will entertain your solitary hours, and you have in him someone to read to, with whom you can chat on literary matters, and with whom you can practise. Therefore I will not quarrel with you about the suit; yet if you were to give it to him you would do a most graceful and proper act. Farewell. Paris, January 27, 1501.[15]

Amid such financial difficulties as these he was compelled to look everywhere for assistance to enable him to hold his place with dignity among those whom, by reason of his attainments, he considered to be his natural compeers. He consequently very frequently threw out an anchor to windward for this purpose; and hence we have letters to such men as Peter d'Angleberme, Greverade the lawyer, Antony of

[15] Eras. Ep. 146.

Bergen, brother of his patron the Bishop of Cambrai, Nicholas of Burgundy, an ecclesiastic of noble rank, James Anthonisz, Vicar-General of the diocese of Cambrai, James Tutor of Voecht, Nicholas Bensrott, Peter of Courtebourne, and a number of others, each of whom helped him with influence or with gifts of greater or lesser amount, everything being of service and received with thanks, even were it but a cask of wine. The small gifts merited a short but elegant letter of acknowledgment, while a larger present, such as the money offering of the Abbot of Bergen, elicited a choice essay on that particular subject in which he deemed his benefactor to be most interested. And truly he had occasion to strain every nerve, for Batt, the object of all his hopes, who had rescued him from so many financial shipwrecks, had fallen sick. In addition to this disaster, the Marchioness had married, and the marriage did not appear to offer any promise of continuing the occasional gifts which her Ladyship had accustomed Erasmus to expect. Things looked black indeed when he wrote the following letter to Batt:

> I hope it is really a false report about your illness, yet I am somewhat in fear, considering the way mortal affairs are wont to go. Do not be worried about my suit, my dear friend; our affection did not arise from what it might advantage us, neither will it cease when such advantage has departed. What Fate brings to us without any fault of ours must be borne with equanimity and even magnanimity. Would that the Supernal Power might grant me good health, for then I would myself force a way through the rest of my difficulties; but at present I feel very shaky.
>
> I am much surprised that she, who formerly declared her intention of showing me that she was no mere woman, is now acting towards me in a manner more than womanish. But necessity is a harsh master, so we must keep quiet about the matter until opportunity shall serve. My mind ever presages but ill in the matter of the Provost; still, such things must be judged by their outcome. I now cease, dear Batt, to lament my ill luck, since I myself have given up hope. This only makes me feel ashamed that the knowledge of the affair has become so widely spread, and has aroused the animosity of others, I think. Do you, my friend, get strong and well as soon as possible, and do the best you can for your own interests. You see the heated condition of court affairs.
>
> I have written some *Annotations on Cicero's Offices* which will soon be printed. I was about to dedicate it to Adolphus, but I see no reason for that now. Please tell Louis for me that he would do me a great favor were he to copy diligently any epistles which you may have of mine. Farewell, best and dearest Batt. Paris, April 5, 1501.[16]

Having decided that Batt was unable any longer to advance his cause, he resolved to take matters into his own hands and see what he could do by personal application to his friends. He visited Holland, where, as he says, he hardly sat down for two months, so busy was he. At Steyn he

[16] *Ibid.*, 151.

saw all his former brethren. William Herman was a disappointment to him, since he seemed to have completely abandoned the Muses. Writing to James (Tutor) Voecht, he says:

> Being unable by any sort of stimulation to excite my friend William, who is really a pleasant fellow, to go on with his literary work, I left him in such a humor that now I have little regard for him. I so reproached him on your account that he almost parted from me as from an enemy. If Epicurus, come to life again, were to observe the kind of life that William is leading, he would regard himself as a severe Stoic. . . .

Then he goes on to say that his old patron, the Bishop, was cold and unsympathetic, and that nothing was to be obtained from him. From Holland he went to Tournehem, to visit Batt and try his chances with her Ladyship of Veere, but with no better success. He continues his letter as follows:

> With her Ladyship of Veere things were in that state that I was neither able to speak to her without risk, nor leave the place without creating grave suspicion. You have heard about the case of the Provost, who is now in prison; whence her Ladyship also is under surveillance. Deprived of my hopes in this direction, and deeming it a most wretched thing to remain in suspense to no purpose, I hastened straightway to my friend Batt. I pass the time pleasantly with him alone. I work on my Greek, but by myself, for Batt has not sufficient time for that study, and besides, he is fonder of Latin. I am to remain at anchor here for a month or two, and then to set sail for wherever the breezes choose to waft me.
>
> You are already expecting that I was well received by the kindness of the Abbot. I have nothing worth telling you, my dear Voecht, for not even Euripus ebbs and flows like the mind of this man. A little before I came hither he was so ardent in my favor that he dispatched my impetuous scrivener Louis into Holland to summon me thither, having moreover presented him with two gold pieces for his traveling expenses. But when I arrived the fellow was so cold to me that you would liken him to an ogre. Hence I feel that I should place no dependence on such inconstant admirers. A chance meeting with her Ladyship on the street, with her hand outstretched and her countenance kindly, proved to me clearly that she still felt towards me as she always had. But I scarcely expect anything from her, so vigilantly do these watch-dogs, or rather wolves, guard her. So Erasmus must now support himself and wear his own livery. In order to visit William and make a Greek scholar of him, I went to Haarlem with a huge bundle of books, nor do I yet know which was the greatest: the expense, the labor, or the risk; for indeed I had my labor for my pains. There were lost to me on that journey twelve crowns and one friend. For I observed the man's character so closely that I seem to have been making rash promises to myself concerning him hitherto; but, like boys after a whipping,

I shall be wise for the future, and look out for myself rather than for others.

You have, my dearest Tutor, almost all the news about your Erasmus, for I should consider it very wrong if Tutor were kept in ignorance of anything Erasmian. About the affair of Dismas, I am placing special confidence in your performing of your kind offices. Wherefore I am bold to promise both in your name and his. For the rest, tell me all the news about your affairs, what the Bredani brothers are doing, who indeed in my opinion should be restrained by strict rules from studying too much. What news of my Augustine, of whom so far I have been unable to find out anything? And finally, what is my Bensrott doing? Write to me briefly but faithfully of whatever is of interest to you or to me. My friend Batt loves you no less ardently than he does myself. Beware of deeming this false, dear Tutor, for there is nothing truer. I am thinking, or rather dreaming, of visiting Italy this autumn, but nothing hopeful in that direction thus far appears. I hear that Busleiden, the brother of the Bishop of Besançon, has arranged to set out thither; that he is a man who appreciates literary characters and thinks my own talent not the worst; a fact which makes me think that, if my brain had not been altogether stupid, I could have crept into his friendship by some crevice or other. Farewell. July 17, 1501.[17]

This letter was written from Tournehem, to which place he had hurried, after his trip through Holland, with the purpose of visiting Batt, who was seriously ill; and of making a last attempt to secure something from the Lady of Veere. He found that the Lady had married, as we have said, and that henceforward nothing was to be expected from that source. He also found his old and much-tried friend Batt, the one who had stood by him in good fortune and ill, who had lifted him up when he was down, who had encouraged him in his moments of depression, who had given him freely of his own money, and when this did not suffice, had gone and borrowed more from his friends to relieve the necessities of this most exacting of friends, he found his good friend Batt, alas, in very poor case, and like to die of some fatal disease, the particulars of which have not come down to us. The two had had dreams of a time and an opportunity to come when, with financial worries solved, and prosperity shining on them, they were to live together in a literary world all their own, where creditors would enter not, neither would the carking cares for the morrow come in to disturb their minds from loftier things. All literary men have had such dreams; some few have attained to this blissful existence, but the most of them see their airy visions blown away like gossamer threads in the summer breeze. So it had come to pass with the plans of Erasmus and his faithful Batt. The latter's illness, though gentle and gradual, proved to be mortal, and he died sometime in 1502, the exact date being unknown to us. It must have been with mingled feelings of sorrow

[17] *Ibid.*, 157.

for Batt and apprehension for himself that Erasmus left Tournehem for the last time and betook himself to St. Omer, where he hoped to stay with the Abbot of St. Bertin, the brother of the Bishop his former patron, or elsewhere as chance might offer. A few days after arriving here he wrote to Batt a short letter in what he calls a joking vein, and this was the last letter of his to Batt that we possess. But he had kept his promise to Batt to make him famous, though at this moment there seemed little chance of such a thing. Yet, wherever the name and early struggles of Erasmus are read and pondered over, the name of Batt, his earliest and most faithful disciple, shall be remembered. This is the letter:

> I need not bid you be of good cheer, since I well know that you are long ago rejoicing that you have shaken from your back such a troublesome burden as I have been. Just now Adrian is inviting me to come to him. The Warden openly advises me that I had better stay with the Abbot, if I can profitably do so. On the other hand, the Doctor urges me to go to Adrian's. Each acts, I suppose, as dogs are wont to do who love no rival in the kitchen. I doubt if the Warden will be a sincere friend in all things, for I feel that he is somewhat arrogant. Nor did he ever say a word about Adrian when with you, although through him the matter ought to have been brought about. Whatever may be the issue, I will keep cheered up. Take care of your health, my dear Batt. As soon as a chance will offer, send me all my belongings and all my dialogues; perchance I may feel like completing them. Urge on Louis to transcribe as much of my letters as he is able. Farewell. On the advice of the Doctor I will not delay Louis any longer, lest those cowled friends of mine murmur at me still more. St. Omer, August, 1501.[18]

[18] *Ibid.*, 163.

CHAPTER XIII

SEEKING PATRONS: THE "ENCHIRIDION"

So Batt passes from the stage, and Erasmus looks about him for those who may be able and willing to take his place. The wealthy Abbot of St. Bertin's monastery at St. Omer, brother of the Bishop of Cambrai, his former patron, offers him hospitality. Adrian, who was, like Augustine, a sort of transcriber and dealer in books and manuscripts, solicited him to share a similar partnership, but he was mostly moved to seek the friendship and assistance of Nicholas Bensrott, one of his former pupils, who had already relieved his financial necessities by a timely loan, and who, he thought, could easily take the place and perform the offices of both Batt and Augustine. Even before Batt's death he had very delicately tried Bensrott out in the following letter addressed to him at Paris:

> Frequent and accurate reports are borne to me daily that the plague is raging widely and sparing nothing at Paris. So, since I was afraid that you might have taken flight in some direction, I did not consider it wise either to write at great length, or to send you much material, lest, on account of your absence, my efforts should go for naught. But I will now touch on the principal topics.
>
> This messenger is the first by whom I have been able to write to you, dear Bensrott. I send you Euripides and Isocrates, and others are ready which will reach you later. I will take measures to meet your wishes about the *Defense of Milo* as soon as I shall procure the oration and the books necessary for the task. If anything has happened there which you feel I ought to know, inform me of it. If Augustine has returned, give him the letter which I have enclosed with yours. And I bespeak again and again your earnest care for the trifles which I have left in your charge.
>
> If you have thought out any tangible plan for our living together, you will find me most agreeable to it. You will understand, I suppose, what I am alluding to. I could hardly make you believe, dearest Nicholas, how eagerly I long for it; but as I scarcely dare hope for such a thing, so I dare not advise you. It irks me that your character, so upright and so philosophic, is even now scarcely known to me, although I have always appreciated it and spoken of it most highly. Still I know not how it happens, whether by the excessive modesty of both of us, or by the operation of other causes, that I have never dared to promise myself the close friendship of Bensrott. And yet, as I am wont to be constant in fulfilling the duties of friendship, so am I reserved in adding to my friends.

If there has been borne thither anything new in Greek, load this man with a bundle and me with a favor. Do not fear, Nicholas, that I shall make you a poor return for your kindness to me; but trust me that I shall seek neither recreation nor rest until I shall have repaid the whole debt to the best of my ability. And when I say debt, I do not mean only those coins which I accepted from you as a loan (and, in truth, I consider myself indebted to you for no very trifling sum), but much more for your good will and your exceeding kindness to me, the remembrance of which shall never fade from my memory.

You will be satisfied with this for the present, dear Bensrott; as soon as I know for certain that you are in Paris, I will see to it that some evidence of my labors shall go to you forthwith. I wish that you would see that the letter written to James Tutor may be carried by a safe messenger to Orléans. Farewell. From the Castle of Tournehem, July 17, 1501.[1]

Meanwhile Peter of Courtebourne, a connection of the Baron of that name, had invited Erasmus to pay him a visit at his country residence, an invitation which he accepted with alacrity, since it relieved him for the present of the necessity of making any radical decision as to his future abode. Here he devoted himself once more to his studies with greater vigor than ever; he writes to Edmund, a monk of the Franciscan community at St. Omer, for books, books, and still more books to work on.

To Edmund:

I have buried myself in the country house of the accomplished prince of Courtebourne for these winter months, in order to meditate on sacred literature; and would that I might have your company, my dearest Edmund, with the permission of the Prior. But in this matter, as likewise in others, we must willingly make use of the common proverb: "When you cannot have what you want, you must want what you can have." However, it would be in keeping with your goodness to suggest to Adrian that he oblige me with a few books. Pray, let him send me some on Paul, Augustine, and Ambrose. Let him borrow Origen from the monks of St. Bertin at the same time, and let him go bond for my assured trustworthiness; for he will not be deceived. Besides this, I especially desire, if possible, that *The Homilies of Origen,* which the Prior possesses, may be sent with them. I should like also to receive the Lyran[2] or anyone else who has written on Paul. A wagon will be sent on Saturday, by which all these things may be brought here. Meanwhile you will see to it that the books are ready at that time. If at any time either Adrian or the Prior will deign to visit me, I will gladly see them whenever they wish. Farewell, my dearest Edmund; I beg you to give this matter your most diligent attention. From the Castle Courtebourne ⟨late in 1501⟩.[3]

[1] Eras. Ep. 158. [2] Nicholas of Lyra. [3] Eras. Ep. 165.

It was about this time that he made the intimate acquaintance of John Vitrarius, or Jean Vitrier, as he is sometimes called, who was destined by his life and example to exert a great influence on him. At this time Vitrarius was Warden or Prior of the Franciscan monastery at St. Omer, and had acquired a reputation for strictness of conduct and sanctity of life which was not unattractive to Erasmus, if we may judge by the effect it produced on him. His first impression of Vitrarius was that he was a reserved and frigid character, but he soon found that underneath his ascetic exterior there dwelt a warm heart and a soul full of holy zeal. Like all really good men, he had been misunderstood and misprised, and yet he bore his wrongs in a manner that won the admiration of all men, even of Erasmus himself. But though Erasmus could admire his conduct under adversity, he could never have imitated him. They were the two extremes of strength and weakness; and it was the recognition in Vitrarius of those qualities lacking in himself that attracted him so strongly to this great and noble man. And so he linked his name with that of Colet, and drew for posterity a picture of these two men whose characters, dissimilar as they were, had equally attracted him. His portrayal of Vitrarius, despite the fact that it shows traces of his favorite obsession, the monks, and is in one or two instances extravagant, notably in his depicting Vitrarius as being strangled by eight desperate nuns, gives us nevertheless the outlines of a soul that was truly filled with the apostolic spirit; and one loves to dwell on the spirit of tender love for God and fellow-man that actuated both Colet and Vitrarius, manifesting itself differently in each. Erasmus has made of his sketch a classic, and it is strange that, with the exception of three English translations, it lies buried in the ponderous tomes of the Leyden edition of his works.

Much as the sickness of Batt had disarranged his plans, his purpose to visit Italy by hook or by crook still held firm. In another letter to Tutor (Voecht) he says:

> Here are my plans for the future. At times I think of visiting England again, in order to spend a month or two with Colet in studying the higher theology; for I am well aware how profitable it might be for me. But those detestable cliffs, where formerly I suffered shipwreck, still terrify me. I long as much as ever to see Italy; but, as Plautus says, "It is not easy to fly without wings." The pestilence shuts me out of France; the climate suits me in Holland, but I hate her Epicurean meals. Add to this that the men there are a sordid, uncultivated sort, with a strenuous distaste for study, paying no tribute to erudition but that of the deepest envy. And further, all my brethren seem to be tacitly demanding this one thing especially, that I shall return to them accredited with a degree, and be thereby armed as it were against the arrogance of the unlearned. So I have no settled policy up to the present, but will bend my course in that direction where favoring winds may summon me.[4]

[4] *Ibid.*, 159.

There is an amusing inconsistency about this letter which is truly Erasmian. In one breath he calls his brethren, whom he fears he shall shortly have to rejoin, sordid, uncultivated, averse to study, and envious of the studious. In the next breath he states that these same brethren are eager for him to obtain a degree so that he and they may have this weapon against the arrogance of ignorance. He could not help this fault-finding, for it was part and parcel of his neurasthenic malady. He was at this time about thirty-seven years old, and, as a consequence, the peculiarities of his youth had become the fixed habits of his middle years. The events of his early life had not been very conducive to tranquillity of mind, even had his neurasthenia been of much milder degree. The Bishop of Cambrai had cast him off, the Marchioness of Veere had forgotten him, and, greatest loss of all, the faithful Batt had been snatched from him by an untimely death. These successive blows to such means of support would have been fatal to the literary aspirations of most men, but not so with Erasmus: no sooner was one avenue of maintenance closed to him than he opened up another for himself by sheer ingenuity and persistence. Closing our eyes to his faults which were the consequence of his heredity, his ill-health, and his poverty, we can have nothing but admiration for the indomitable courage of the man whom no calamities could successfully daunt, no obstacles permanently hinder. He was passing now through some of his darkest hours, for in addition to his precarious financial condition he could never forget for a moment that in his old monastery at Steyn there were morose and unsympathetic spirits who might for several reasons be glad to see him sent back to them, and none knew better than himself how easily this might be accomplished by a strong appeal to the higher ecclesiastical authorities. The great weakness of his position as a monk away from his monastery was its irregularity, and he was well aware how severe the Church was in all matters that infringed her discipline. Hence he took care by every means within his power to keep himself informed on what was happening in his old home at Steyn. So, although he was not on the best of terms with his friend William Herman, who was still a monk there, his desire to keep in touch with the current of events in the community impelled him to write to William in spite of the coolness existing between them. He seeks to enlist William's sympathy on his side, in his usual masterly manner, by retailing the Odyssey of his misfortunes:

> The plague has driven me to Louvain and still detains me here. This year fortune has raged against me terribly in that death, or poison rather, has taken away Batt, and in addition thereto the Bishop of Besançon in whom my highest hopes were placed. A marriage far beneath her rank has snatched the Lady of Veere from me, the sea separates me from my English nobleman [Lord Mountjoy], the study of law has called away Augustine from me, while the plague has shut me out at once from France, England, and Germany. Everything is agreeable for me at Louvain, except that the mode of living is very frugal and costly, while of money there is none to be made. I have refused the position of lecturer offered

me by the magistrates. I am entirely given up to Greek, and certainly not without result, for I have so far succeeded that I can write fairly well in Greek whatever I wish, and that on the spur of the moment. I hear that your *Apologues* have been published, therefore send me a few copies; also send me back the Greek fables, since you no longer need them now. For I am laboring here amid a great penury of Greek works. Augustine has written me quite sarcastically about his copies of the *Adages;* you only laugh about the matter.

If there is anything going on there which it imports me to know, write me. I am surprised that you do not write to me; for although you dislike me, yet you should write to one who may be able to advance your reputation, for I am in intimate relations with many, and they too of the most learned. Your name is oftenest in my mouth, and I have never forgotten you, although I perceive that you are almost hostile to me. Yet I will willingly vie with you in love, but not in contempt or hatred, especially with you whom I have so loved. Farewell, dearest William, and love me if you can.[5]

That envious minds and bitter tongues were busy at Steyn in magnifying his faults of commission and omission there can be no doubt, for the defects of human nature are often present, and at times glaringly so, even in the most saintly retreats. Did not the high-priest Aaron forget himself before the Lord, and did not unworthy monks conspire against the life of the gentle St. Charles Borromeo? But the latter's saintly and generous conduct in forgiving his enemies was not the sort of thing to appeal to Erasmus. He had the neurotic's sensitiveness, and could not rise superior to envy or malice. So, when his brethren in Steyn made remarks about his mode of life, or spoke disparagingly of his writings, such things rankled in his breast, so that he answered in kind. It is probably in expostulation against some such vitriolic outburst on his part that Brother Nicholas Werner was led to express his disapprobation of these furious and impotent retorts. This kindly and gentle monk had just been elected Superior of Steyn, and was now in a position to help and advise the brilliant but erratic member of his monastery who had been away from them for so long. Erasmus has not preserved Prior Werner's letter to him on this occasion, but we can glean its import from his reply:

Erasmus of Rotterdam to Father Nicholas Werner, Greeting:

If I am rightly informed, you would seem to be somewhat offended at my letter, for the reason that it was couched in freer terms than were becoming, though what it said was most true. But your kindness ought either to ascribe this to my just resentment, or to the fact that, in a letter to which is due the assurance of secrecy, it is permitted at times to express one's self somewhat freely. For how could I express my indignation with any sort of dignity against a man who has poured out, or rather, vomited out, such epithets against me? Some there are in your midst, I know not who, but

[5] *Ibid.*, 172.

evidently the dull and ignorant, who consider all piety to consist in a cowl and a long face. There is nothing easier than the despising of what we are unacquainted with, yet nothing more silly.

Scarcely had I arrived at Louvain when straightway the magistrates of the city offered me, who neither sought nor expected such a thing, the position of public reader, and this because of the voluntary recommendation of Father Adrian of Utrecht, a Dean of this place.[6] For certain reasons I refused the honor, one of which is that I am so near to Dutch tongues, that know so well how to harm, but have never learned how to help a man. Farewell. Louvain, September, 1502.[7]

We can see his indignation bristling between the lines of this epistle, and we need have very little doubt that it was fully warranted by the circumstances. Even the good Prior must have so recognized it, as Erasmus was able to refer to him many years afterwards in the most affectionate terms; so that we may reasonably conclude that they had a mutual understanding in this matter. As we have had occasion to notice more than once already, this old friend and fellow-monk, now become Prior, was the only one at Steyn to our knowledge who really understood the idiosyncrasies of Erasmus, and who was ready to make allowances for them. In this he differed from William Herman and Servatius, proof of which we have already observed in the case of the former, and evidence of which in the case of Servatius we shall be able to offer when we come to treat of the latter. We have another letter from Erasmus to William Herman which shows that in spite of his utmost endeavors Herman remained cold towards him; and the reason for this is not far to seek when we remember the jealousy of Erasmus on learning that the Marchioness of Veere had done William some favors. William, being a poet, probably had his own testy humors, and the vaporings of his fellow-monk were not meekly to be endured. Yet William knew Erasmus better than we of these days can ever hope to know him; and if he did not choose to respond to the latter's effusive offers of friendship, no doubt he had the best of reasons for so doing. The letter gives us a great amount of information about the occupations and future projects of Erasmus, in addition to making known to us some of the new friends whom he had secured since his arrival at the University of Louvain:

Erasmus of Rotterdam to his excellent friend William of Gouda:

Hail again and again, my sweetest William. I have recently translated some declamations, one of Libanius the Sophist, and two of uncertain authorship; and these I have dedicated and presented to his lordship Nicholas Ruistre, Bishop of Arras, the Chancellor of this University. He was greatly pleased with the little present, although it was a mere trifle, and invited me to dinner, besides offering his services in any way in which he might be able to gratify me or mine. On his departure he sent me ten gold pieces by the Dean of Mechlin.

[6] Afterwards Pope Adrian VI.

[7] Eras. Ep. 171.

Some time before Christmas I am to address our Prince Philip with a panegyric on his journey to Spain and his happy return, a matter which I would have finished long ago had I not been little informed on the subject. I have made a friend of Jerome Busleiden, Archdeacon of Cambrai, the Bishop's brother, a man most skilled in both languages—or rather he has made a friend of me. He frequently says that it would have been happy for me if that noble man had returned alive.[8] Of a surety my entire hope had been fixed in him.

I have presented my new friend with a copy of your *Apologues* together with an epistle laudatory of your genius and character. I do not cease to extol my William here and there among my friends, although long since I perceive that you seek no reputation outside of Holland. For as many years as I have spent in France, in England, in Artois, in Brabant, you have never sent me any of your lucubrations by which I might have a suitable opportunity to extol your genius; nor do you even write me a letter which I might exhibit to my learned friends. And yet in the matter of your *Odes* you saw the sincerity of my mind. Although Holland despises me, I am certainly not entirely contemned here, either by the nobility, the clergy, or the professional ranks. Perhaps you will say that there is fame enough, if there was only something a little more substantial. But I differ from you completely in that, since, not rarely, profit follows reputation. In this matter I have often been surprised at the policy you have adopted; but I have been unwilling to make myself hateful to my lifelong friend by frequent exhortations. I conjecture that you are purposely withdrawing from friendly intercourse with me lest you may be called upon to share my unpopularity. And if my conjecture is right, I do not care how ceremoniously you bring it about, since you cannot bear, for the sake of your oldest friend, the companion of your studies (not to make any stronger claim), to despise the foolish chatter of a few cowled and insignificant men or women, of whom you ought to make no more account than an elephant does of a fly, if you have due regard for the greatness of your genius and learning. How much annoyance this fear may cause you no one can know better than I. But let us leave this.

My host John Desmarais, the Orator of this University, a man skilled in both languages, was most ardently expecting your arrival, and I wonder that you did not keep your promise. His Lordship the Provost of Utrecht, my neighbor, speaks of you frequently and with much pleasure. Tell me, how much trouble would it cause you to cultivate the friendship of such men at the cost of a few little letters? Florence of Egmont, the victor in every contest, has brought back so much glory from Spain, Savoy, France, and Germany, that this one man has, I will not say obscured, but utterly extinguished, the fame of all the high nobility. I shall introduce his praises into

[8] Francis Busleiden died while on a journey to the Spanish Court. He was Archbishop of Besançon.

my panegyric. You will do wisely to congratulate him with a letter or, as I should prefer, a poem; and I will see that he receives it, and by my own hand. I celebrated the Bishop of Cambrai [9] in three Latin epitaphs and one in Greek. They sent me only six florins, so that even dead he was like himself. If you will deign to write even a brief letter to my host, it will be very pleasing both to him and to me, and perchance not unprofitable to yourself. Of all men living he is the most generous admirer and assister of literary men. Farewell, most learned William. Louvain, November 27, 1503.[10]

We have reason to assume that the friendship between Erasmus and William Herman was broken off permanently from this point on, since we have no more letters on either side. As a matter of fact, their relations had been somewhat strained for a long time. They were of the same age and had been staunch friends all their lives, having a sincere admiration for each other's talents, and a brotherly way of extolling each other's merits. Occasionally William had had what he considered good reason for accusing Erasmus of selfishness. Specific instances of this were the keeping Herman in the dark about his leaving the monastery to join the Bishop of Cambrai, and the instance of resenting the little presents which the Lady of Veere made to Herman later on. But he was candid enough to acknowledge the great benefits he had enjoyed from the friendship and example of Erasmus, and his favorite expression when speaking of him to others was "our Erasmus." [11]

There may be some truth in the conjecture of Erasmus, which he threw out so casually in the above letter to William, that "you are purposely withdrawing from friendly intercourse with me lest you may be called upon to share my unpopularity." From the eager desire that he expresses in all his letters to Steyn to be informed of what is passing on there that has any reference to himself, we recognize a marked anxiety of mind, as if he realized that things were not going on in his regard as well as might be. From his last letter to Prior Nicholas Werner we are permitted to know definitely that there was some sort of a cabal against him, and that this was headed by one man especially, whose name we cannot learn. It is within the bounds of possibility that this one man was Servatius, for several reasons, chief of which is this: that, though Servatius was one of his earliest friends in the monastery at Steyn, and had made him a visit when he was secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai, since that time no mention of his name occurs in any of the correspondence of Erasmus to Herman or Prior Werner, although he was not only a member of the Steyn community, but also a most influential one, since on the death of Prior Werner the following year he was elected to succeed him. We shall see later on how he tried to put pressure on Erasmus to compel his return to the monastery. However uncertain the identity of this man, there is no uncertainty about the

[9] His former patron who died in September, 1502.

[10] Eras. Ep. 178.

[11] "Cui sane multum debeo, ita nihil gratiæ vel meapte negligentia vel fortuna refero." (Eras. Ep. 142.)

fact that Erasmus was at his instigation subjected to a great amount of criticism, ridicule, misrepresentation, and openly expressed hostility; so that he must often have gnashed his teeth in impotent anger that he could not cut loose from these people forever. With his wonderful vocabulary, it must have been a thing to inspire awe in the listeners whenever he was driven by desperation to express his opinions of the community at Steyn. And with his dreadful impatience towards anything that impeded his aims and ambitions, we may not be surprised that from individuals he proceeded to inveigh against the whole brotherhood, and from that it was but a step to the excoriation of monastic institutions in general. Small wonder then that he was growing in unpopularity at Steyn, and that William Herman, with the poet's dread of tense situations, gradually began to hold himself aloof from him. Jeffery used to say to Carlyle, "You are so dreadfully in earnest," and we can easily imagine Herman saying the same thing to Erasmus, who was a restless spirit, and whose presence put serenity to flight.

But the time was fast approaching when he could feel strong enough in acquired reputation, and secure enough in the protection of powerful and influential friends, to brave the displeasure of his quondam superiors if the worst came to the worst. Let us proceed to see on what grounds he based this confidence. The pestilence that had driven him to Louvain had done him a great service, for there he found both friends and honorable reputation. John Desmarais, the University Orator, had picked upon Erasmus to deliver the Latin address of welcome to Prince Philip on his return from Spain to his own hereditary dominions. Philip was Archduke of Austria, being the son of the Emperor Maximilian and of Mary of Burgundy, and on the death of his mother in 1482 had succeeded her as sovereign of the Netherlands. Hence great preparations were making in Brussels to receive him with all the magnificence and éclat that his rank merited. Hence, too, the address of welcome which Erasmus was to deliver, and which was to take the form of a panegyric of all the ruler's virtues. We need have no doubt that the choice fell on Erasmus because of his great skill and ability in the Latin tongue, some writers going so far as to claim that he was the greatest Latin scholar in the world at that time. This is to claim too much; for, not to mention Poliziano, who had died a few years previously, we must remember that Italy possessed at that moment Sadoleti, Bembo, Sanazzaro, and others, whose reputation for Latin scholarship was not a whit inferior to that of Erasmus, as he himself testified to on occasion. But we may safely say this much without fear of contradiction, that Erasmus was the greatest Latin scholar of his day north of the Alps. So when the great day arrived he delivered his *Panegyric* before the Archduke and the united nobility of Spain and Holland, the subject-matter of which so pleased his Highness that he presented Erasmus with a hundred florins, a princely reward in those days. In addition he offered to take him into his immediate retinue, a favor of which Erasmus did not avail himself, for the presumable reason that such a life would not square with the plans that he had made for his future work. The Prince, however, contrary to the traditional practice of princes, did not forget him, but sent

him another gift of money later in the year for the purpose of maintaining him at the University of Louvain.[12]

With the munificent gift of the Archduke in his pocket, we next find Erasmus at Antwerp, where he was superintending the printing of his *Panegyric,* and another work of his called the *Enchiridion militis christiani,* of which we must now speak. This work must have been a disappointment to him in the beginning, for at first it was not at all popular. Strangely enough, after a few years it became one of his most celebrated books, and maintained its repute for several generations. The circumstances of its origin have been often recounted, but we may state here that it was partly written on one of his visits to Batt at the castle of Tournehem, and finished in its present form at the University of Louvain, at about the period of which we are treating. In the catalogue of his works which he made for John Botzheim, he gives the history of the book as follows:

> The work sprang from chance. There was in the castle a certain mutual friend of my own and Batt's who had a wife of remarkable piety, while he was as bad as could be, a man given to extravagance and the company of the lowest women, and a boon companion at every drinking bout. He rudely despised all theologians, save myself. The wife eagerly longed for the salvation of her husband; so she induced Batt to prevail on me to note down a few things which might inspire a sense of religion in the man, but in such a way that he would not suspect her of instigating the matter. This was all the more necessary since he was excessively savage towards her, not even stopping at beatings, as is customary with soldiers. I agreed, and jotted down whatever I thought was indicated in the circumstances. Since it was pleasing to the erudite, but especially to John Vitrarius, the Franciscan, who was a man of the highest influence in that quarter, when afterwards the pestilence raging widely drove me from Paris to Louvain, I finished it there at my leisure. The book was unnoticed for some time. Presently

[12] Mr. Nichols in his work *The Epistles of Erasmus* doubts that he spoke his *Panegyric* to the Duke, and intimates that he simply handed it to his Highness, alleging as proof that it was too long to be delivered by word of mouth. With a writer like Mr. Nichols, who has done such admirable work in throwing light on the activities, friendships, and general environment of Erasmus, I naturally hesitate in venturing to differ. But in this instance I think he is mistaken, for all that Erasmus says on the matter points indubitably to the fact that he addressed the Duke personally. In the first place, it is doubtful that he would have consented to perform the function on any other terms, for there was very little humility in his make-up, and he was not at that time, or ever, to be abashed by high rank. Now he made the direct statement to William Herman that he was going to address the Duke, and he uses the word *adoriemur* in its old Terentian signification, viz., to accost, to address. Later, in his preface to the printed work, he states that the Duke testified his pleasure in the *Panegyric,* "not only by his eyes and mien, but by the very expression of his countenance," which I submit could only refer to the actual hearing of the address, rendered no doubt as it was in the flowing Ciceronian periods of one of the best Latinists of the age. It was probably short and concise when uttered, but when he revised and edited it for the press, he enlarged it to its present length, as he informed John Desmarais. (See Eras. Ep. 180.)

it began to have a remarkable sale, due principally to the commendation given it by some of the Dominicans, who were later alienated by a preface which I added and addressed to the Abbot Paul Volzius, a man of pure Christian morals, if there ever was one.[13]

This *Handbook of the Christian Soldier,* or *The Christian Soldier's Dagger,* for Erasmus translated his title in both ways indifferently, was just what it purported to be, a little treatise of Catholic faith and belief. which indicated at the same time the sins and weaknesses to which that age was subject. Where he got the title is not of importance. He may have appropriated it from Epictetus, whose *Enchiridion* had been recently translated into Latin by Poliziano, for which Italian writer he always professed great admiration. The further along the writer of this study of Erasmus progresses, the more it is borne in on him that few men have suffered so much from the rashness of their biographers; and he is in constant fear lest he may inadvertently follow their example. The reason for the above remark is that many of them have imputed ideas and motives to him which have no foundation in any statement that he has left in his writings. Let us take a concrete example of this from Drummond's *Erasmus,* where in speaking of the *Enchiridion* he quotes Erasmus to the following effect:

> Man, he says, consists of soul and body, which at first acted together in perfect harmony, and would have continued to do so, had not the serpent sown the seeds of contention between them. Since that time there has been perpetual warfare between the two, the spirit striving against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit. But the consequences of the first sin would not seem, in the estimation of Erasmus, to have affected the essential nature of the soul, which is still spoken of as divine, and as retaining a consciousness of its heavenly origin. "But that divine principle, which, bearing sovereign sway within us, ever counsels us to our good, remembering the source whence it has come, admits no baseness nor impurity."[14]

Drummond's comment on the above is a most surprising statement, viz., "his [Erasmus'] idea of human nature is almost wholly Platonic." It is nothing of the sort; it is simply the third chapter of Genesis paraphrased. Pennington, another biographer of Erasmus, speaking of the *Enchiridion,* says: "They [the Dominicans] were very angry with Erasmus, because he condemned those who made religion consist in the performance of outward rites and ceremonies, *while they altogether denied the power of godliness.*"[15] Erasmus certainly made severe accusations against certain monks, but just as certainly he never said anything at all resembling this which Pennington lays at the door of the poor Dominicans. Seebohm too, in his *Oxford Reformers,* speaking of the *Enchiridion,* says:

> The *Enchiridion* was, in truth, a reëcho of the very keynote of Colet's faith. It openly taught, as Colet now for so many years had

[13] *Ibid.,* I, p. 19, l. 36. [14] Vol. I, p. 114. [15] P. 59. Italics mine.

> been teaching, that the true Christian's religion, instead of consisting in the acceptance of scholastic dogmas, or the performance of outward rites and ceremonies, really consists in a true, self-sacrificeing loyalty to Christ, his ever-living Prince; that life is a warfare, and that the Christian must sacrifice his evil lusts and passions, and spend his strength, not in the pursuit of his own pleasure, but in active service of his Prince; such was the drift and spirit of this *Handbook of the Christian Soldier.*[16]

One would imagine from this that Erasmus and Colet were making a new departure in the Christian life of that day, and that, for some indefinite period previous to their coming into the world, there had been no real love of God, no love of neighbor, no sincerity, no fervor, no self-abnegation, no realization of the relations existing between the Creator and the creature, but that all was formalism and ceremonial observance. Neither Colet nor Erasmus ever made such a claim; then why should Seebohm seek to establish such a hypothesis even by implication? Thomas à Kempis was still a fragrant memory when Colet and Erasmus were babes; yet so far is his work from being formal that it is even mystical. Was it by "scholastic dogmas, or the performance of outward rites and ceremonies" that Bernardin of Siena, in that same century, often addressed audiences of thirty thousand people, and so impressed them that men threw away their gaming implements and women their frivolous finery, in their endeavors to do penance for their sins? We may readily believe that there were formalists and ceremonialists in those days, but equally the products of that same age were John Vitrarius and the saintly Archbishop Warham. No, Erasmus knew his fellows well and, while he made his appeal against formalists, he was thoroughly aware that they represented but a part of the great body of Christians. So we can accept at its face value the statement of Erasmus to Colet as to the purpose of the *Enchiridion,* when he writes to him:

> I did not write the *Enchiridion* for the display of genius or eloquence, but only to correct publicly the error of those who base religion on ceremonies, and on an attention to externals which is almost more than Jewish, while strangely neglectful of the things pertaining to piety. So I have endeavored to furnish them with a sort of Manual of Piety, after the manner of those who have written certain methods of instruction in the sciences.[17]

Again Seebohm thinks he sees in the *Enchiridion* a tendency to interpret the text of Scripture *allegorically* rather than to seek out its *literal* meaning. It is probable that he grounds his opinion on that passage of the *Enchiridion* where Erasmus is advising the persons for whom he is writing the work to "select rather those interpreters of the Sacred Scriptures who depart as much as possible from the letter." And then he instances St. Paul, Origen, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine as such interpreters. Certainly if Erasmus had developed the tendency that Seebohm mentions above, he could not have exercised it in better company.

[16] P. 173.

[17] Eras. Ep. 181, l. 46.

But Seebohm failed to note that Erasmus was here drawing a contrast between the ancient fathers and the modern sciolists, for the very next sentence reads as follows:

> For I observe that modern theologians adhere too willingly to the letter, and bestow their labors on deceptive subtleties rather than on elucidating the mysteries, just as if St. Paul had not truly said that our law is a spiritual law. For I have listened to many of them, who have derived so much pleasure from these uninspired expositions of theirs that they have ridiculed the interpretations of the ancient writers as being almost dreams; and such confidence had Scotus instilled into them that, even without having read the Sacred Scriptures, they deemed themselves consummate theologians.[18]

In treating the works of such a misunderstood character as that of Erasmus we must be on our guard not to read into his writings any of our own preconceived ideas, and not rashly to lay on his shoulders derelictions which he may never have committed. The *Enchiridion* has a form and subject-matter very familiar to Catholics, as it resembles many similar handbooks that were issued in various ages of the Church for the instruction and edification of the people. A careful perusal of it discloses no real differences between this work of Erasmus and the others just mentioned, except that with his wonderful knowledge he has seemed to address himself to a more learned sort of readers by introducing here and there apt classical allusions which would convey nothing at all if read by the unlearned. But every page testifies to his thorough knowledge of the Sacred Text and leaves one with the impression that there were few branches of sacred literature with which he was unacquainted.

As a profession of his beliefs the *Enchiridion* is of importance to all who would really like to know what Erasmus deemed to be sound Catholic doctrine and practice. He realized that on account of the utter lack of education of the great mass of the laity there had crept into religion an excessive reverence for forms and ceremonies. To the ignorant the mysterious is always prolific of a sort of fear, and an unreasoning desire to propitiate a superior Power whose capacity for helping or harming them is boundless. Hence they reason that what most impresses them must naturally impress this mysterious Power; and consequently the rites and ceremonies of the Catholic Church have in all ages made a strong appeal to such as these. And, having due regard to their limitations of intellect and education, it is perhaps well that such is the case, since such rites and ceremonial practices arouse the spiritual part of their natures as no other thing has ever been able to do. Erasmus himself realized this well and was always careful to distinguish, on the one hand, between the pious and well-meaning efforts to raise the mind and heart to God in this way and, on the other, a blind and senseless superstition. And so he tells such people in the *Enchiridion* to be cautious in their external acts of piety:

[18] *Enchiridion*, p. 72. Leyden, 1641.

> There are those who offer certain rites to particular saints. One invokes St. Christopher each day, but only while gazing on his statue; and for what purpose? because he is convinced that he will that day be safe from an unhappy death. Another invokes a certain St. Roch; and why? because he imagines he will keep him free of the plague. This one mutters prayers to St. Barbara or St. George that he may not fall into his enemies' clutches. That one fasts in honor of St. Apollonia to prevent the toothache.[19]

And so he goes on recounting the many forms of invocation of the saints. Now he does not aim to abrogate such customs for one moment, but only wishes them not to mistake the shadow for the substance, just as many others of the ascetic writers of the Church have advised. He goes on to say:

> [The way to revere the saints is to imitate their virtues.] A saint appreciates better this sort of reverence than if you were to burn a hundred candles before him. You think it a great thing to be buried in the habit of St. Francis; but the similarity of habit will avail you nothing after death, if your morals were dissimilar when living. . . . You pay the greatest respect to the ashes of St. Paul, and rightfully so if your religious life is in conformity with such act. But if you reverence these dead and mute ashes, and pay no attention to that visible presentation of him which lives, and speaks, and almost breathes in his writings, even to the present day, is not your devotion absurd? You honor the bones of St. Paul hidden in a shrine; but you do not honor the mind of St. Paul hidden in his writings. You make a great ado over a scrap of his body seen through a glass case; but you do not wonder at the whole mind of the saint made manifest in his works.[20]

He protests that the simple and uneducated souls who are the offenders in these regards must not be blamed too harshly:

> I do not at all despise this ignorance, but I cannot suffer them to take trifling things for the most important, the least for the greatest. Moreover, I will commend their asking St. Roch for a life free from sickness, if they will devote that life to Christ. But I would praise them still more if they asked nothing else than that their love of virtue be increased by their hatred of sin.[21] . . . No honor is more pleasing to Mary than the imitating of her humility; no devotion more acceptable to the saints, or more appropriate, than the copying of their virtues. Do you wish to deserve well of St. Peter and St. Paul? Imitate the fidelity of the one and the fervor of the other, and you will accomplish more than if you were to make ten pilgrimages to Rome. Do you wish to render the greatest honor to St. Francis? You are proud, you are an admirer of wealth, you are quarrelsome; make this offering to the saint: restrain your passions, and, after the example of St. Francis, be more unassuming, despise sordid riches, and seek avidly after the good things of the

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 153. [20] *Ibid.*, pp. 175-6. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

soul. Cease all contention, and turn evil into good. The good saint will esteem this a greater honor than if you were to burn a hundred candles for him.[22]

All this seems to be thoroughly in accord with Catholic teaching, then as now; but how far the practice of the laity was in accord with the precepts of the Church in these regards we have no means of knowing. We do know, however, that the people of those days had a simple and abiding faith in the goodness, wisdom, and omnipotence of God, and that, if there was at various times and in certain places a laxity of morals, there was no infidelity. Even Erasmus himself, who has been accused of every sort of sin in the decalogue, including freethinking, atheism, liberalism, and all kinds of heresy, was penetrated, at least in his youth, with a lively and simple faith and an unassuming piety which do him honor. He firmly believed in the efficacy of the intercession of saints, as we have shown previously in his invoking the help of St. Genevieve against the constantly dreaded enemy, pestilence. He even went further than this and adopted the pious persuasion that each of us has a personal angel to guard and protect him from temptation. To quote his own words: "And indeed in every temptation, but especially when you are solicited to impurity, place before your eyes your guardian angel, the constant observer of your every act and thought." [23]

If anyone doubts his sincere love for the Virgin Mother, and the value he placed on the efficacy of her intercession with her Divine Son, let him read the passage in the *Pæan virgini matri dicendus,* beginning with the words, "Thou art nearest to the Divinity in order that we may not be lacking an advocate," etc., and also the passage in his *Oratio ad Mariam in aduersis,* beginning with "Hasten to my assistance, my preserver, my life, etc."

Altogether the *Enchiridion* is a remarkable book, and we cannot agree with Feugère when he calls it "somewhat cold, and composed of thirteen chapters with little connection between them; and yet, we know not why, it was one of the most frequently translated works of Erasmus." [24] And so he dismisses it. The work breathes an air of piety which, in our opinion, was not assumed. There is a warmth of feeling manifested which here and there amounts to real fervor; and it is not strange that it eventually found its readers and made its appeal. But, having said that we are thoroughly convinced of its author's sincerity in what he believed and taught as his understanding of Catholic belief and practice, we now approach another topic which he treated in this work, and which, having to do, not with faith, but with the Religious Orders, of which he himself was a member, touched him personally. Now we have already seen that anything that touched him personally assumed an importance in his eyes that at times is difficult for us to measure properly.

[22] *Ibid.,* pp. 174-5. [23] *Ibid.,* p. 297. [24] *Étude sur Érasme,* p. 29.

CHAPTER XIV

ANIMOSITY TOWARDS THE MONASTIC ORDERS

Properly to understand the reasons for the terrible animosity which Erasmus evinced towards the monks, and of which the first faint signs appeared in the *Enchiridion,* published in 1504, when he was thirty-eight years old, we must remember that he himself was a monk and a member of the ancient Canons Regular of St. Augustine; and that, in taking the step that enrolled him in their ranks, he had given up to the Order for its own use and benefit his personal freedom of action. As we have before stated, this was a fatal error on the part of Erasmus, for no man ever lived who claimed and maintained his right to independence of thought and action more than he. And yet at the very outset of his career he had deposited that right at the feet of his superiors. This was a terrible mistake, but he apparently took the step with full knowledge of the meaning of his act. He was twenty-one years old, and was of a high degree of intelligence which was further enhanced by an education that was remarkable for its breadth and solidity. But he assuredly had no vocation for a religious life, as the term vocation is understood in the Catholic Church. That he was permitted to make his final vows, in spite of this fact, is something the blame for which must be ever equally shared between Erasmus and his Order. To the Order he was not at that time Erasmus, but simply one of the thousands of young men who yearly made application for admission to its ranks. The Order could easily have dispensed with the accession of this particular applicant to its midst, as it had already existed for some centuries; but the question to be solved at that moment by Erasmus was whether he could dispense with the necessity of joining this or some similar Order. He decided that he could not, and so he assumed all responsibility for the consequences. Dr. H. A. G. Vorstman of Gouda has given some interesting details of the monastery of Steyn in his *Het Klooster Steyn, of Emmaus, bij Gouda,* from which we copy a few paragraphs. It was first founded in 1419, and granted additional privileges by Jan van Treslong, the lord of the territory in which it lay, in 1436. It stood a mile from Gouda, but on the farther side of the river Yssel. The monastery caught fire on July 16, 1549, and was burned to the ground; but a new site was given the monks in the town itself by order of the town council, a circumstance which would point to the fact that the monks of Steyn were respected and appreciated by the townspeople even after both Erasmus and Luther had done their utmost against the monastic institution in general. There was a clear understanding between the town and the monastery, made in 1451, that at the death of one of the brethren all

his property, beyond the value of sixty-five English nobles, was to revert to his heirs, should they demand it, but during his life the monastery was to have the income of all his possessions. And to avoid all misunderstanding on this point, each novice, before taking the final vows, was compelled to present himself before two aldermen, or two other citizens of the town, and there make affidavit of what property in money or land he was bringing to the monastery; and of this a list duly signed and sealed was kept both by the town and the monastery.[1]

Hence we see that the professing of a novice partook of the nature of a public function, since he had to appear before the town officials in this manner, and all Erasmus' highly colored stories about kidnapping boys vanish into thin air. At least we can be certain that he was not kidnapped.

But to realize properly the gravity of the step which he had taken, and to gain some knowledge of the life to which he had committed himself, we must glance over cursorily the duties and obligations of a monk in those days, which have changed very little even up to the present. The Rule of St. Augustine, to which the monastery of Steyn in common with all other Augustinian monasteries was subject, is somewhat long, being divided into seven parts, one for each day of the week; so we will take the part for Sunday, which will be sufficient at least to show us the spirit of this famous Rule.

THE RULE OF ST. AUGUSTINE [2]

Chapter the first. Before all things, dearest brethren, let God be loved, then your neighbor; for those be the commandments that are chiefly given to us; these therefore are the precepts that we lay upon you who are established in monasteries for your observance. In the first place, inasmuch as you are assembled together in one place, that you be of one mind in the house, and let there be to you one mind, and one heart in God. And call not anything your own, but let all things be common to you. And let there be distributed to each of you by him that is set over you food and raiment, not equally to all, because you are not all of equal value, but rather to each of you as each shall have need. . . . Notwithstanding, let that which they are in want of be allowed to their infirmity, even though their poverty, when they were abroad, was unable to find bare necessaries. Let them not, however, imagine themselves fortunate, because they have found food and raiment such as they were unable to find abroad; nor let them stiffen their necks because they associate with

[1] "Ende *om alle onmoede ende twivelachticheit,* die in toecomenden tijden van deser medegave ghevallen mochte, te voirhoeden, ende om een claer verstant daer of te hebben, soe sal elc persoen, die ten cloester comt, voer sijn professie, comen *voer twe scepenen of twe poerteren.* ende belien daer alsulc medegave als hij ten cloester brenghet, groot of cleyn, yet of nyet. Ende daer sal dat cloester een bezeghelden brief of nemen, ende nae inhout des briefs sellen wij hem recht doen ende vonnis sonder vertreck, als dat gheboert." (P. 334.)

[2] Copied from a transcript probably written in Holland, now in the British Museum, and translated by John Willis Clark of the University of Cambridge, England.

those whom they did not venture to approach abroad; but let them lift up their hearts, and seek not the vain things of the earth, for fear monasteries should begin to be of use to the rich, and not to the poor, if the rich are humbled therein, and the poor are puffed up. Again, too, let those who seemed to be something in the world not disdain their brethren who came into that holy society out of poverty; but let them rather be careful to boast of the society of poor brethren than of the nobility of wealthy relations. Nor let them be exalted if they have contributed something out of their own possessions to the common life; nor let them be prouder of their wealth because they share it with a monastery, than if they were enjoying it in the world. For every other species of iniquity is busied about wicked deeds, that they may be perpetrated, but pride insinuates itself even into good deeds that they may come to nought. And what advantage is it to spend your goods in giving to the poor, and to become poor yourself, when the wretched soul is made prouder by despising wealth than it had formerly been by possessing it? Live therefore, all of you, of one mind, at peace with one another; and honor among yourselves mutually God whose temples ye have been made.

The monastic idea was that of a community where each member coöperated with all his powers and abilities to the support and maintenance of the rest, with the ultimate object of insuring thereby his own salvation by means of prayer and sacrifice until death finally released him from all earthly struggle. It was also intended as a corollary of this, that if there were a superabundance of prayer and good works, such surplus could be offered up for the benefit of all those who were living in the world. It was a beautiful idea in its inception, worked well for many centuries in practice, occasionally in many places and at various times was abused by the unworthy and worldly, and has depended in all ages for its proper functioning on individual sacrifice and self-abnegation. Steyn seems to have been an ordinary community of the Order; and if not rendered illustrious by any remarkable examples of sanctity, assuredly has never been associated with any malodorous traditions of loose morality.

The life in the monastery was an unchanging routine of prayer, work, recreation, and sleep. Prayer was public and private; the public consisting of chanting the Canonical Hours of the Church in common, the private being according to the spirit of devotion animating the individual brother. If one had not the proper spirit of sacrifice which leads men of all ranks to make a supreme offering up of self, it is readily conceivable that such a life as the following must have been a constant source of irritation. We copy it from the *Account of the Priory of St. Peter and St. Paul at Bath (Eng.),* and it approximates closely the life followed in all monasteries in the days of which we are treating.

In all seasons alike the monks rose from their beds at midnight and went into a cold church—think how terribly cold it must have

been in the depth of winter—and there went through a service, or rather two services, Matins and Lauds, which were mostly sung, and lasted about an hour and a half. They then crept back to bed again. At 7 a. m. they again assembled in their church for Prime, and at its close there was a short meeting in the Chapter-House for the ordinary business of the house, and especially its discipline. After that, one of the monks in priest's orders would, in turn, celebrate Our Lady's Mass, while others would be reading or talking in the cloister. At 9 a. m. came Tierce, which was followed by High Mass and Sext. Dinner time was in the fourteenth century probably 11 or 11.30, and during the meal some lesson would be read aloud. After dinner came Nones; and while most of the monks were engaged in that service, the *Conversi,* or lay-brethren, and the monks who had in turn served the others at dinner, sat down to their meal. Then came a short time set apart, if desired, for sleep, which was followed by active employment of different kinds, by study, or recreation. Vespers were sung at 3 p. m. Supper was at 6, and was followed by a reading from some book of edification. At 7.30 came Compline, and then at 8 the brethren went to the dormitory to sleep until they were aroused for Matins. It was in the intervals of these stated duties that the officers of the house transacted its manifold business, and the other brethren studied in the "carrells" or wrote and illuminated in the Scriptorium.

In addition to the Rule, and directly derived from it, monasteries were also governed by a set of regulations known as Observances. For our present purpose we will make use of those belonging to the Augustinian Priory of St. Giles and St. Andrew, at Barnwell, near Cambridge (Eng.), which according to John Willis Clark were copied almost verbatim from those of the Augustinian Abbey of St. Victor at Paris, perhaps the most important monastery of the Order at the time Erasmus was living. It is only by a close scrutiny of these Observances that we can learn what sort of a life Erasmus was supposed to adjust himself to when at Steyn. They were the by-laws of the Order, by which every activity of the brethren was regulated, and which served to make the machinery of administration run smoothly. They embrace almost every possible detail; but the parts that interest us mostly at present have been excerpted below as follows:

24TH OBSERVANCE

Of the reception of Novices

In selecting novices, the brethren should be careful not to choose those of whose election they may afterwards repent. Their spirit ought to be tested, whether it be of God.

If strangers ask for the habit, inquiry should be made, before they are received, as to their country, parentage, knowledge, behavior, voice and power of singing, capacity for writing, or for executing any mechanical art; in the next place, as to their bodily stature,

whether they possess all that it is natural to possess, namely, eyes and all other members, and if they are fit to take Orders; whether they have incurred obligations elsewhere, or consort with any woman; whether they are oppressed with debt, or are bound to repay borrowed money; whether they are sometimes attacked by any secret malady. Above all things, let inquiry be made as to whether they are good-tempered, sociable, trustworthy, and of good character. Finally, if they are likely to be of use to the monastery, in the name of the Lord, let them be admitted. Novices ought to be received by the Prelate, not in the hall, nor in his chamber, but in full Chapter, and with the consent of the convent. The Prelate ought first to point out to them the strictness of the Order, and especially the three essentials, perpetual chastity, poverty, and obedience, which three are directly opposed to the flesh, the world, and the devil. In the next place, he should make it clear to them that they must render obedience from the heart. If they asseverate that they are able and willing, by God's grace, to perform these things, let him frankly assent to their petition for the sake of God and charity, and admit them to the kiss of brotherhood. Next let the Precentor take them first to the Sub-Prior, and to the brethren on the Prelate's side, and in the next place to the senior next the Sub-Prior, and to the rest in order, so that all may kiss them. The Precentor who has led them round ought to kiss them last. Then, bending the knee again before the Prelate, they are to have assigned to them by him a time for providing their habit, and a fixed day for putting it on. Should they fail to appear on that day, whatever has been done before shall be null and void.

This method cannot be exactly followed with regard to venerable and well-known persons, should they ask for the habit; for such persons are often vested in it with great emotion and joy in their own houses, when lying on a bed of sickness. In such cases where delay is dangerous, should the Prelate be away at a distance, his return ought not to be waited for, but the Sub-Prior, or one of the senior brethren, by consent of the convent, will perform this duty in all haste.

25TH OBSERVANCE

Of the clothing and instruction of Novices

. . . Let him [the novice] be led by the Precentor into the Chapter-House and there, on his knees before the Prelate, let him again prefer his petition to live and die in that congregation, according to the rule of blessed Augustine. Then let the Prelate again point out to him the strictness of the Order, and inquire whether he be fit to take Orders, and if he be ready to render obedience *et cetera,* as stated above. . . . When the prayers are over, let the Prelate grant him a year of probation, and assigning to him a place in which he ought to abide, let him hand him over to his master [of novices] to be taught his way of life. . . .

26TH OBSERVANCE

Of the year of probation

A vow is a deliberate promise to do something virtuous. He therefore who intends to take upon himself a vow of profession among Canons living under a Rule, ought to have time for deliberation. On this account a year of probation is allowed to those who are taking upon themselves a religious habit. A vow may be of two kinds: a vow of necessity, or a vow of free-will. Vows of necessity are those to which a person is bound at baptism, that he hold the Catholic Faith, and renounce the devil and his pomps, for without this no salvation is possible. A vow of free-will, on the contrary, is a virtuous thing to which a man is not bound by precept, for salvation is possible without it, and a man binds himself to it of his own accord, and afterwards is held fast by it—as by the vows of continence, poverty, and obedience. . . . Therefore, before anybody makes a vow of profession, he is allowed a year of probation, that at the end of the year he may make his profession of his own accord, and deliberately. He is thenceforward bound by necessity to keep that which he had before incurred by deliberate choice. Moreover the year of probation is allowed as a favor both to the novices and to the convent, for, should the novice be found amiable, sober, chaste, devoted to God, proper for a religious life, fit to take upon himself Holy Orders, and well-disposed to serve in them, he will suit the convent. Further, if the novice be able and willing, chiefly for the sake of God, to endure with a good heart nocturnal vigils, a dull life in the Cloister, continual services in the Quire, prolonged silence, the strictness of the Order and of the particular house, and the different characters of the brethren, it will suit the novice that leave should be given him to profess at the end of the year. Should, however, some canonical objection arise in consequence of which he either ought not to profess, or is unwilling to do so, let him, before the year is completed, take off his regular habit, and go away in his secular habit. Should he, however, stay in the convent beyond the full year, and continue to wear the religious habit, though he may not immediately profess, he shall thenceforward be regarded as one who has professed: nor will it be possible henceforth either for the brethren to turn him out, or for him to retire without some good reason.

27TH OBSERVANCE

Of the method of profession

When a novice ought to make formal profession, he is to make it on a solemn day at the high altar, write it out with his own hand, and offer it on the altar. . . . At the end of the Litany, let the novice rise, and standing in front of the altar-steps where he was before, let him read, so that all may hear, his profession which he had before written out in the following form: *I, brother N., offer myself to the divine mercy to serve in the church of St. N. of such*

and such a place, under the canonical Rule of blessed Augustine, without property of my own, in chastity, and I promise obedience to my Lord N. the Prior, and his successors whom the more judicious portion of the whole congregation of that Order may by God's will elect in that church.

Such provision on the part of the Order, looking to the compelling of the candidate to avoid precipitate action, and causing him to make deliberate and thoughtful preparation for this irrevocable step, certainly shows that the founders of the Monastic Orders understood the ways of the young and impressionable neophytes, and had taken commendable measures to nullify the effects of rash impulse. And so rarely did it happen in the long history of the Monastic Orders that, after such deliberation and delay in accepting candidates, any one of them subsequently regretted the step, or complained that force had been put upon him to enter the ranks, that not even Erasmus himself with all his industry and research could point out an authentic case of his own knowledge. So perhaps we might exculpate the Order and lay the blame squarely on him. It will not be necessary here to go into the reason for Erasmus' weak and lamentable failure to stand up at the proper and critical moment and tell the Superior of his convent that he could not go on with the life, and ask for the privilege of returning to the world as the Observances of the Order permitted, since we have already gone over that matter when treating the Grunnius letter in Chapter III. It could not have been his extreme youth, for we know that he was twenty-two years old at the time of his profession. It could not have been any natural diffidence in his own power of protecting his rights, for rarely was there such a self-assertive youth, if we are to judge by his letters. So we are compelled to the conclusion that the monastic life with all its possible defects was the best he could hope for at the time, and that consequently he conformed with all the requirements, even to the year of probation, and adopting a *laissez-faire* attitude took the solemn vows, whose terrible impressiveness at least ought to have given him pause. It was a fatal day both for him and for monasticism; since, with true Erasmian inconsistency, he blamed all his after-troubles and trials not on himself, but on monastic institutions in general, and lost no occasion to lessen their influence and bring them into disrepute. Literary geniuses in all ages have been rather erratic and difficult subjects in their relations to those compelled to live with them; and it furnishes interesting food for cogitation to wonder if this peculiarity of greatness would not have been manifested by Erasmus whether he were surrounded by the environment of a monastery, or by that of a wife and family. He was all his life sickly and irritable, and the irritable are proverbially unjust. We must convict him also of ingratitude, if we have properly understood what the monastery at Steyn had done for him. Briefly recapitulated, the superiors of that community had received him into their midst when his private funds were practically exhausted; they had provided clothing and maintenance for him during the five following years; they had recognized that he was a youth of superior abilities, and

had facilitated his going out from amongst them to take service with the Bishop of Cambrai as his private secretary; and when the Bishop's plans for him were brought to a futile conclusion, from circumstances beyond that prelate's control, they gave their consent that he should attend the sessions of the University of Paris, with the idea of taking his degree of D.D., which they felt would bring honor equally to him and to the monastery. All this seems very much in accord with the spirit of the Rule, and is very much to their credit. It shows that this community at least had bowels of compassion, and that its brethren were not the kind of men whom Nisard had in mind when he penned his rather disgusting diatribe against monks in general. As a specimen of what a savage and blind intolerance can produce as veritable history to be believed by the uninformed, we think that the following extracts taken from that writer's work on the Renaissance are unequalled, and consider that his conclusions should be accepted very carefully:

> The monk is a personage without a father and without a child, without a past and without a future, wholly given up to the present and to its material joys, a sort of pilgrim encamped as a master in a strange land, who gorges himself therein with all the good things that the people bring to his feet, a mixture of intolerant ignorance, of craftiness, of cruelty, of libertinism, of superstition, of gross idleness, of stupid piety, the hood of whose habit is firmer than many crowns. The monk is the enemy of books because he knows not how to read, the enemy of science because science kills his scholastic jargon so perverting to the sense of the people. He is restless, furious, in the midst of this renaissance of literature and the arts. He lowers his dull eyelid before the light of reawakened antiquity, just as a bird of night before the day. Far different from that austere, grave monk, lost in God, that our illusions of the Middle Ages and our tolerant indifference represent to us, was the one whom Erasmus depicts for us, whose corruption and filth used to cause him nausea; that violent, malignant monk, menaced in his privileged ignorance and libertinism, whom the formidable press of the sixteenth century, recently created by Erasmus, had just surprised and unmasked in the depths of his cloisters where prostitution is introduced by the back door. It was that monk, lying heavily on mankind with the weight of his thousands of monasteries, putting under his hood the light brought to us by Christ, at that time a personage of much less moment than St. Christopher, St. Benedict, or St. Francis; that monk, in a word, who is useless when he is honest and pious, but more destructive than pestilence and war when he is cunning, active, and clever. . . . The monks were men of pleasure; they gave themselves up to it scandalously, hastening to carry into the same house confession and adultery, or hiding within the walls of their convents debauchery that would have terrified the city. . . . The monks were vulgar guests, living for their bellies and not for Christ, soiling their sumptuous feasts with the buffoonery of the slums, or with quarrels

mingled with revilings, then coming before the people with staggering gait, to vomit their drunken eloquence against men of letters and reformers.[3]

As far as the truth of history is concerned, the pity of the above intemperate language of Nisard is that he may justly claim Erasmus as his authority for some of his statements therein. That there were good monks and bad monks in all ages we need not doubt. St. Augustine, speaking for his own times, tells us that we may be assured that in every class of persons in the Church there are those who are not what they appear to be. But we are not concerned here with the question of whether monasticism has been good or bad, and will only recall to mind in passing the very sage remark of Neander, "that it makes an essential difference whether the monastic system is attacked from a pure and free Christian standpoint, or from the standpoint of a worldly spirit which is incapable of perceiving and acknowledging what is Christian and elevated in it." [4] But what does concern us here and now is whether the vast body of monks who were Erasmus' contemporaries were as corrupt and immoral as Nisard—backed too often unfortunately by the authority of Erasmus—says they were. Let us look across the German border to an Augustinian monastery in the town of Erfurt, and see what was taking place there. That community was fulfilling its mission as a fosterer and exponent of the true monastic spirit, as exemplified in the Rule of its illustrious patron St. Augustine. In attendance at the lectures of the University of that same town of Erfurt was a young student named Martin Luther, who was busily preparing to take his degree in philosophy at the time when Erasmus was publishing his *Enchiridion*. He was the usual student at a German university, jovial and merry, but with a keen ardor for learning which enabled him in 1505 to graduate with all the honors attendant on the bestowing of the degree of Master. After this he began the study of law in the same University, with every intention of making that career his life's work, when suddenly, abandoning all his prospects of worldly advancement, he made application for admission into the Augustinian monastery of that place, where he was received and placed on probation, just as was Erasmus nineteen years earlier. There he was put under the spiritual guidance of such men as Arnoldi, and later of Staupitz, both of whom he always ever afterwards reverenced, even though they discountenanced and condemned his work in the times soon to come. Both these monks were able men and spiritual souls who were filled with the true Christian ardor for the advancement of God's kingdom on earth; and both recognized in the fervent and devout novice a kindred spirit. And his biographers tell us that he advanced daily in piety, unworldliness, and zeal, receiving edification from the example of the brethren, and in turn edifying them by his candid and unblemished conduct. And when the year of probation was finished, and the time was come when he had to decide for all time what his future was to be,

[3] *Études sur la Renaissance*, p. 41.
[4] *Memorials of Christian Life in the Early and Middle Ages*, p. 197. Bohn, London, 1852.

he presented his petition to be taken into the Order, and made all the sacred promises that we have noted on a former page. And so he continued his studies under the sage and mature guidance of his monastic teachers until the opening of the new University of Wittemberg, where he was appointed to the position of lecturer in philosophy.

Now the point we wish to make here is this: if the monks were all that Erasmus said they were, would Luther have sullied the candor of his soul for one moment by contact with such people? And would Frederick the Wise of Saxony in founding his new University of Wittemberg have handed over the control of the philosophical and theological departments of that institution to such a dissolute and illiterate class of men? We may enlarge the scope of our inquiry and ask if Staupitz himself, or Arnoldi, or Lange, or Link, or Oecolampadius, or Bucer, or Eberlin, or Abbot Crato, or Stifel, or Kettenbach, or Zwilling, or hundreds of others, who were all of them monks and personal friends of Luther, were the sort of men who, having sought admission to religious Orders and finding them as dissolute and immoral as Erasmus says they were, would have continued to dwell therein and have made no sign. Hence we have long thought those who believe and repeat the extravagances which Erasmus directed against the monks do little honor to the character of Luther and his many monastic friends. And no one was in a better position than Luther to know the daily lives of his brethren; for we must remember that his good friend Staupitz, recognizing his fitness for the post, had appointed him Provincial Vicar for Meissen and Thuringia, which meant the superintendence of eleven monasteries, and the daily and continuous investigation into the spiritual welfare and moral conduct of a multitude of his fellow-monks. And the record of his visitations still remains to show us with what zeal and ardor he labored in this work, encouraging the strong and uplifting the weak, comforting the erring and stimulating the lagging, appealing to all his brethren by word and example to falter not in the work they had elected to perform in the vineyard of the Lord. And this was in 1515, when he had already been a monk for ten years, and at a time when as yet no one dreamed of the Reformation which was to begin two years later.

But perhaps the strangest reflection of all is that most of Erasmus' friends were also monks. How could he say all the vile things he did about them when he thought of such monks as Richard Charnock, the hospitable Prior of St. Mary's at Oxford, or of Gaguin, or Cornelius Aurelius, or Nicholas Werner, or John Mauburn, or Arnold Bostius, or Richard Whitford, or Antony of Luxemburg, or Nicholas Bensrott, or the hundreds of other monks who were his earliest and best friends? So when Nisard says that the monastic friends of Luther and Erasmus, whose names we have given above, were "a mixture of intolerant ignorance, of craftiness, of cruelty, of libertinism, of superstition, of gross idleness, and of stupid piety," and that they "lowered the dull eyelid before the light of reawakened antiquity, just as a bird of night before the day," he shows a total unconsciousness of the motives which actuated Erasmus; and at the same time impugns the intelligence of Luther and

all those other bright minds who found spiritual peace in the cloister. And it was not the conditions that surrounded them within their monastic homes that led some of them to abandon them in the days to come, but something far different, which does not enter into our subject here.

Up to quite recently, it has required a large amount of courage to defend openly the monks of the Middle Ages. Relying on the testimony of men whose judgment was influenced by the passions which the Reformation aroused on both sides, we have assumed that the monks were universally bad, and that they suffer a merited obloquy. Yet they originated in the earliest ages of the Church, and during all the centuries they have produced saints and sages whose memory Catholic and Protestant alike delight to honor. Such being the case, it is hard to believe that these cloisters were the homes of men and women who were steeped in blindest ignorance and foulest villainy. As a matter of fact, they were not worse, but very much better, than the people by whom they were surrounded, and from whom their ranks were kept filled up. They have been looked upon as self-centered and as having had few interests outside of their own walls, each intent on securing his or her individual salvation irrespective of the needs of their less spiritual brethren outside. This may or may not have been so; we are not here concerned, however, with that question, and will only say that human nature is proverbially selfish, and that even cloistered monks might have been found who were more interested in *meum* than *tuum,* where their own salvation was the consideration. Christ set us the great example of altruism, or love of neighbor, but the race has profited little by it; yet perhaps the ranks of the Monastic Orders can show greater and nobler exemplifications of His Spirit than can be found elsewhere. Be this as it may, it is only just to them to say that, during the Early and Middle Ages, they preserved for us all that was worth preserving of ancient art and literature; and for this, if for nothing else, our gratitude is due them. And not only did they preserve the ancient art and literature, but they originated their own, and the cathedrals and picture galleries of Europe bear rich testimony to their diligence and industry. Wherever they had a foundation, they left the indelible mark of their presence both on the country and its inhabitants.

And so, when we run across such a savage statement as that of Nisard already quoted, we feel somehow that it is untrue; and we like to dwell on other and more instinctively natural pictures of what the lives of the monks were. The beautiful picture that Green gives us of the death of the venerable Bede comes to one's mind almost involuntarily, so that it seems good to copy it here:

> Two weeks before the Easter of 755 the old man was seized with an extreme weakness and loss of breath. He still preserved, however, his usual pleasantness and gay good-humor, and in spite of prolonged sleeplessness continued his lectures to the pupils about him. Verses of his own English tongue broke from time to time from the master's lips—rude rimes that told how before the "need-fare," Death's stern "must go," none can enough bethink him what

is to be his doom for good or ill. The tears of Baeda's scholars mingled with his song. "We never read without weeping," writes one of them. So the days rolled on to Ascension-tide, and still master and pupils toiled at the work, for Baeda longed to bring to an end his version of St. John's Gospel into the English tongue and his extracts from Bishop Isidore. "I don't want my boys to read a lie," he answered those who would have had him rest, "or to work to no purpose after I am gone." A few days before Ascension-tide his sickness grew on him, but he spent the whole day in teaching, only saying cheerfully to his scholars, "Learn with what speed you may; I know not how long I may last." The dawn broke on another sleepless night, and again the old man called his scholars round him and bade them write. "There is still a chapter wanting," said the scribe, as the morning drew on, "and it is hard for thee to question thyself any longer." Amid tears and farewells the day wore on to eventide. "There is yet one sentence unwritten, dear master," said the boy. "Write it quickly," bade the dying man. "It is finished now," said the little scribe at last. "You speak truth," said the master; "all is finished now." Placed upon the pavement, his head supported in his scholar's arms, his face turned to the spot where he was wont to pray, Baeda chanted the solemn "Glory to God." As his voice reached the close of his song he passed quietly away.[5]

And century after century the monastic orders continued to send forth the products of the system, and we note the names of Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, Dominic the Preacher, Vincent Ferrer, Thomas of Villanova, Vincent de Paul, and a host of other sage and saintly men who issued from what Nisard would have us think were dens of iniquity. It cannot be so. There was a Judas among the chosen twelve, and there were sinners in the monasteries as well as saints, but they were not so by reason of their environment, but rather in spite of it. The life of a monk, as we have seen, was an austere one at best, and sweetened by little that makes life beautiful for the world outside. They chose it deliberately, in most cases eagerly, with all its fasts, its mortifications, and its self-abnegation; and if some fell away from the fervor of their first estate, rather should we marvel that so many persevered unto the end, when we reflect on the weakness of our common nature. That which is intrinsically and essentially corrupt will of necessity decay and perish off the face of the earth. But the monastic orders have not perished, but still maintain a vigorous and beneficent existence; and, whatever any man may think as to the advisability of their perpetuation, there is no divided opinion as to their high moral purpose.

But to return to Erasmus and the *Enchiridion*. In this work he very cautiously displays his opinions concerning the monks' mode of life, their adherence to the traditional usages and customs of the Church, and their importunate seeking for recruits to fill their ranks. During

[5] J. R. Green, *Short History of the English People*, Vol. I, pp. 66-7. Harper, 1879.

all the rest of his life these were the themes of his discontent with the monastic system; and as we shall meet them constantly hereafter we will proceed to quote his beginning strictures as they appear in the earlier editions of the *Enchiridion.*

> I am not now speaking of those monks whose habits even the world detests, but of those whom the common people look upon not as men but angels. And such it behooves not to take offense at this discourse, since it censures not men but vices. And if they are good men, let them rejoice to be admonished by anyone as to those things which pertain to salvation. Now I am well aware that there are very many such monks amongst them, who, being assisted by learning and talent, enjoy the mysteries of the spirit. But, as Livy says, it generally happens that the greater part prevails over the better. Moreover, if the truth may be told, do we not see even the strictest orders of monks basing the excellence of religion either on ceremonies, or on certain laws of psalmody, or on bodily toil; and if anyone will investigate, and inquire particularly concerning matters spiritual, he will find very few who do not walk in the flesh.[6]

Further on he goes into the question of overzealous monks who exceed the bounds of good judgment in seeking recruits for their various orders, and we recognize the arguments which he later used in his letter to Grunnius:

> I have treated this betimes, because I somewhat feared that you might fall among that superstitious class of monks who, partly serving their own profit, and partly from excessive zeal but not according to the dictates of good judgment, travel over land and sea, and whenever they meet a man returning from his vices to a better life, thereupon by the most dishonest exhortations, threats, and coaxings, endeavor to draw him into a monastic community, as if there were no Christianity outside of a cowl. Then, when they have filled his mind with trivial scruples and inextricable perplexities, they bind him down to certain little human traditions, and thoroughly immerse the wretched man in a certain kind of Judaism, teaching him to fear rather than to love. The life of a monk is not piety, but a sort of life which may be either useful or useless for the individual, according to his bodily or mental condition. Such being the case, I do not either persuade you to it or dissuade you from it. This only I advise, that you do not constitute your piety either in food, or in outward form, or in any visible thing, but in those things which we have taught you. In whatever things you shall perceive the true image of Christ, to those attach yourself. However, where there is a lack of men whose company may make you better, withdraw yourself as much as you can from human society, and seek converse with the holy prophets, with Christ, and the Apostles.[7]

[6] *Enchiridion,* p. 196. Leyden, 1641. [7] *Ibid.,* p. 327.

All this seems reasonable enough if it be true that the monks were as injudicious in their efforts to add to their numbers as he says they were, and we need have no doubt that some instances of such mistaken zeal came to his notice, and possibly flagrant ones. But when he expresses his disapproval of ceremonies, or of the singing of the Psalms, or of bodily toil as outward expositions of interior religion, he opens up a vast and oft-debated question, and one which involves the retention or abolition of the entire Church Liturgy. The Liturgy in general signifies a form of prayer and ceremonial established by ecclesiastical authority, to be used in the public services of the Church. In this limited sense the Lord's Prayer is liturgical, as are the set forms used in the administrations of the Sacraments. The Liturgy of the Church was at all times beautiful and impressive, and was originally intended to be so. It centred principally around the Sacraments, but as most of these were abolished during the Reformation the liturgical accompaniments naturally suffered the same fate. The world in general recognizes that this was a mistake, for it left the services in the reformed church very drab and cold, and they thus soon lost their hold on the affections of the people. In some countries, notably in England, attempts are being made to remedy this defect by re-introducing portions of the ancient ritual. However, since the Liturgy is not of the essence of Catholic faith, but only an administrative and devotional set of formulas devised by the wisdom of some of the great fathers in the Church, we need not occupy ourselves further with it here, except to advert to the fact which Erasmus sought to point out, that religion *per se* and the forms in which it is presented are two different and distinct entities.

As to his advice against making bodily toil assume for the monks a form of religion, we must disagree with Erasmus entirely. They elected to work in the early days that they might not become slothful and indolent. They found the hardest drudgery the surest remedy against unruly passions, and in mortifying the flesh they offered up to the Creator the gift of a pure heart. And not only did they work for their own salvation, but also for the moral and physical well-being of their fellow-men. In the earlier Middle Ages it was they who taught the secrets of intensive agriculture to the peasantry of Europe, and turned swamps and deserts into beauty spots for the use and delectation of humanity. They instructed the young, healed the sick, consoled the dying, fed the poor, and defended the weak. And morning, noon, and night they offered up these works of theirs to the Most High; and we cannot deny that such action was the highest form of religion which has ever at any time been practiced. But Erasmus practiced a purely personal and subjective form of religion which was highly intellectual; and he could not appreciate the fact that there might be others who willingly chose to honor God with the humble labors of their hands, just as he had chosen to devote to God the labors of his mighty mind. He must have known, but evidently had lost sight of, the dictum: "It is the intention which qualifies the act."

Now we may well assume that all this was not lost sight of in the

monastery at Steyn, and must have been the occasion for much comment of various sorts as to the ideas and opinions that the wandering brother was sending forth to a wondering world. Things were greatly changed in the community, for Prior Nicholas Werner, his tried and trusty friend, was dead, and in his place had been elected his old friend and comrade Servatius Rogerus. Now, as intimate and as ardent as was their friendship in those early days, the fact that for twelve years Erasmus in his letters made no mention of Servatius might indicate that their relations were not as friendly as of yore, and that the election of Servatius as Prior, and consequently his Superior, might not be regarded by him as an occasion for jubilation. However this may be, we know by a letter which he shortly sent to Servatius that the latter had written to him plainly, and had set forth in measured and incisive terms that he must render an account of his goings and comings, and must by no means forget that he was a member of the community at Steyn, and, as such, bound to defer in all things to the authority of his Superior. The occasion for the letter which Servatius sent him was his going over to England presumably without getting previous permission from his Prior; although he insists that he had written him before setting out. However, we will quote the letter, which if we only read between the lines teaches us considerable:

> I wrote to you long before I left Paris, and I suppose that letter was delivered to you; yet such is the carelessness of messengers that I fear somewhat that it may have been lost. So if perchance I am at fault I will make reparation for it by the diligence and frequency of my writing to you. It would take a long time to explain to you why I went to England, especially in view of the fact that I was formerly despoiled of my money there, but chances not to be despised seemed to be offered me; and I trust that you will believe me in this, that I went to England not without grave reasons, and by the advice of prudent men; and, furthermore, how the thing may turn out is in the hands of Providence, although I sought not wealth, but a quick way to learning.
>
> I have now been several months with my friend Lord Mountjoy, who with great earnestness invited me to England, at the solicitation of all the learned men here. As a matter of fact, there are in London five or six fine scholars in both languages, such, I think, as not even Italy itself can produce at the present moment. I make no claim for myself, but, as it appears, there is not one of these men who does not make much of my talent and learning. And if in any way it were allowable to boast, I would do so for this especial reason, that I am esteemed by such men as these, towards whom there is no one so envious, no one so unfriendly, that he will not cede to them the leadership in literary matters. But I consider nothing accomplished unless I am approved by Christ as well, on whose judgment alone depends all our happiness. Farewell. London, from the Bishop's Palace. 1505 ⟨*ad fin.?*⟩.[8]

[8] Eras. Ep. 185.

We may properly infer from this letter that Servatius had demanded to know why he had gone over to England without letting him know, and what was his object in so doing. Also we may fairly deduce from it that Servatius had admonished him of the danger in which he stood of becoming worldly and, in his zeal for learning, forgetting his spiritual interests. And then there is always present in the correspondence with Steyn a note which plainly says that he is at least understood and properly esteemed outside the monastic walls. Evidently the reply of Erasmus was not very pleasing to Prior Servatius, for he did not deign to answer it. This we learn from the following letter of Erasmus, which reached Steyn a few months afterwards. The silence of his Superior must have been disquieting to him, as he was left in ignorance of the Prior's intentions towards him, and we have already seen that Erasmus was of a suspicious and apprehensive nature. So he writes as follows, addressing his letter this time more formally and with greater deference to *Father* Servatius:

> I have already sent several letters to you, and I am astonished that you have not sent me a syllable in reply. Here in London, as it appears, I am still on the most friendly terms with the greatest and most learned men of all England. The King of England has promised me a benefice; but the arrival of our Prince in England has compelled him to delay the matter.
>
> As for myself, I am continually turning over and over in my mind how I can devote entirely to religion and to Christ what still remains to me of life (and indeed how long or short that may be I know not). I perceive the life of man, even when it is long, to be fleeting and soon over, and that I have a weak frame whose strength has been exhausted not a little by my studious labors, as well as by misfortunes. I see no end to my studies, since it seems to me every day that I am only beginning. Content, therefore, with my mediocrity (especially since I have acquired enough Greek), I have decided to devote myself to meditating on death, and to setting my soul to rights. I ought to have done this long ago, and to have been more frugal of my time, my most precious possession, when it was most valuable. But, though it is too late to spare when all is spent, yet must I conserve more carefully what remains, even though it be short and less valuable. Farewell. London, April 1, 1506.[9]

We have no right to question the genuineness of Erasmus' sentiments as expressed in this letter to his Prior, though they are far different in tone from those he was expressing at the same moment to his other correspondents. The Prior, however, was apparently influenced by them to the extent that for the present he made no further effort to constrain him to return to the monastery. So Erasmus for a time breathed freely, and proceeded to enjoy the society of his English friends.

[9] *Ibid.*, 189.

CHAPTER XV

LAURENTIUS VALLA: THE "ANNOTATIONES"

Erasmus had gone to England with increased reputation, due to the fact that since his last trip to that country he had published his *Adagia,* his *Enchiridion,* and still more recently his *Annotations on Laurentius Valla,* in which he first displayed his capacity for Scriptural exegesis. It is of this last work that we must now speak, since it shows the trend which his mind was taking, and the freedom which he assumed to treat theological subjects then illuminated and clarified by his newly acquired knowledge of Greek. In Valla he found a man entirely after his own heart, an elegant Latinist, a lover of the ancient civilizations, a scholar and an accomplished writer, wielding a trenchant pen, and possessing a fulminating diction. He had a taste for controversy which made him many enemies, as it has never failed to do in every age and society. Valla was born about 1415 and died the year before Erasmus was born, viz., 1465. We are not informed as to where or how he got his education, but that he received a thorough one we can have no doubt, for he is acclaimed by friend and foe one of the most learned men of the fifteenth century. He found that in the hands of the Schoolmen the Latin language had degenerated into a pedantic jargon, full of barbarisms and modern turns of phrase, according to the nationality of the person who happened to use it. Now, Valla was a precisian of the most punctilious brand, and to see his beloved Latin abused was enough to throw him into a passion. He was unsparing in his condemnation of such barbarism, and, as a consequence naturally to be expected, soon incurred the anger of the Schoolmen by the ridicule which he brought upon them. Hence criticism and contradiction were the principal occupations of his life, so much so that the hostility of his enemies at last made Rome too hot for him, and we next find him at Naples. Some blame his exit from the Eternal City on the Pope of that day, others with equal probability on the enemies which he had created for himself by his sharp tongue. Bayle quotes Paulus Jovius about him:

> "Valla allowed himself great liberties, and was of a satirical and contentious disposition; for he would bitterly inveigh against the writings of others, and maintain violent disputes in learning against the ignorant, as if it were a matter of great importance. Several books of invectives and recriminations containing much learning and wit, are extant, wherein, whilst he endeavors to defend his wounded reputation, he seems to murder that of Facius, Panhormita, Pogius, and Raudensis." [1]

[1] Bayle, *Dict.,* Art. "Valla."

Then Bayle goes on to say:

> . . . If he had confined himself to criticise on the Humanists, he had escaped several reflexions published against him with a great deal of animosity, which he returned in the same stile; but he did not stop here, he carried his censures yet higher; he fell on the ecclesiastics, and spoke very boldly of certain things which they approved, and he disliked.[2]

These divines spoken of above were not slow to avenge themselves on him, and watched every opportunity for fleshing their grudge against him; so it is not to be wondered at that they searched his works narrowly for signs of heresy, that they might hale him before the Inquisition, and thus make that institution, which was intended for the extirpation of heresy, the instrument of their own petty spite. Spondanus, one of his contemporaries, tells us the following:

> "Laurentius Valla, a man learned indeed for that age, but of a most virulent tongue for any age whatsoever, having advanced some heretical propositions, was brought before the Inquisitors, thrown into prison, and condemned to be burned as an Heretic, but by favor of King Alphonsus he escaped the execution of that sentence: however, having publickly abjured those propositions, he was privately whipped round the cloisters of the Jacobine monastery with his hands tied behind him."

Bayle continues:

> Spondanus doth not cite the proposition which Laurentius Valla was obliged to retract; he doth not even say that they contained Heresies relating to the Trinity, Freewill, etc.; he saith only that one of Laurentius Valla's enemies insinuates it. This may make us think that Valla's doctrine was misrepresented by captious and malicious extracts, that it was charged as erroneous, though not really so. Observe, that notwithstanding all the mischievous efforts of the Neapolitan Inquisitors, he lived honorably at Rome; he there obtained permission to teach; he enjoyed a pension, and the Pope's esteem. This confirms the opinion of those who conjecture he was no Heretic, but that it was resolved he should be chastised for having censured the clergy.[3]

We may fairly deduce from all this that Valla was a man of positive views, and accustomed to maintain them with scanty gentleness or suavity. This is a tactical error in controversy, for truth is always more effective when sprayed on than when delivered at high pressure. He had that weakness of many great men, pride of intellect, which makes them intolerant of the opinions and judgments of others. We may very well question the soundness of his judgment, and even entertain, as did the divines of his day, serious doubts as to his moral principles. For instance, in his essay *De voluptate,* he lays down the proposition that "My life is a greater good than that of all other people.

[2] *Idem.* [3] *Ibid.*

What belongs to ourselves ought to be our first concern, secondly what belongs to our parents, and lastly what belongs to our country, that is, to other people." [4] And he exemplifies this as follows: "I cannot at all understand why anyone would wish to die for his country. You would die because you do not wish your country to perish; as if, forsooth, your country will not be dead to you when you perish." [5] And in the same essay the following extraordinary suggestion is made, which for obvious reasons we prefer to leave in the original Latin:

> Ausim medius fidius affirmare, nisi foedae simul et emeritae feminae reclamarent ac veluti agmine facto impetum facerent, vtpote quae numero vincunt formosas, vel nudas vel seminudas vtique in aestate incessuras, quod vtinam, vt pro me dicam, hoc a viris permitteretur et plus bellas corpore quam deformes, teneras quam exsicatas audiremus. Nam si his feminis, quae pulchrum capellum, pulchram faciem, pulchrum pectus habent, has partes denudatas ferre patimur, cur in eas iniuriosi sumus, quae non iis, sed aliis partibus pulchrae sunt? [6]

Our space will not permit us to follow Valla any further through his daring attacks on the morality of his contemporaries, and perhaps the following will give us a sufficiently clear estimate of his total unfitness as a leader of religious thought and morality. Imagine any man making such a statement as the following: "Omnino nihil interest vtrum mulier coeat cum marito an cum amatore." [7]

It is not really known how he incurred the enmity of the ecclesiastical authorities, some asserting that it was because he censured the translation of the Scriptures known as the Vulgate, others that his personal character was not good, and still others that it was because of having committed himself to a violent attack on the temporal power of the Church. Perhaps each of these causes helped at various times and places to make him unpopular. He was not ashamed to say that he was the father of three children, although he had never married; and if the divines objected to a man of such personal morals setting himself up as arbiter of what was right and what was wrong in ethics, we must allow that our sympathies are with the divines. So, too, if the followers of the Scholastic method felt that a man who openly advocated the Epicurean system was an unsafe man to be entrusted with Scriptural emendations, it would be rash to say they were wrong in so doing. To use a much abused phrase, he was brilliant but erratic; and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* characterizes him quite concisely when it says that he was "a vain, jealous, and quarrelsome man, but he combined the qualities of an elegant humanist, an acute critic, and a venomous writer. "His *Elegantiæ,* of which fifty-nine editions were issued between the appearance of the first edition in 1471 and the end of 1536, was an admirable work, a model of Latin style, illustrating with the greatest nicety grammatical distinctions and the finer shades of meanings. It was not

[4] Valla, *Opera,* p. 929. Basileae, 1540.
[5] *Ibid.,* p. 928.
[6] *Ibid.,* p. 915.
[7] *Ibid.,* p. 921.

without reason that he was called a grammarian; and perhaps this is his best claim to the gratitude of posterity.

His influence on Erasmus was deep and lasting from the time in the early days at Steyn when a copy of the *Elegantiæ* fell into his hands; and we can easily measure, from the eagerness with which he wielded the cudgels in his defense against Cornelius Gerard, the degree of esteem in which he held Valla. Hence we may imagine his joy when, on returning from Louvain to his beloved Paris, in this present year of 1504, he had the pleasure of bringing with him a manuscript copy of Valla's *Annotations on the New Testament,* which he had lighted upon in the Library of the Abbey of Parc, just outside of Louvain. We have no evidence that he ever read more of Valla's writings than are contained in the *Elegantiæ* and the *Annotations,* for it was not till four years after the death of Erasmus that the complete works of Valla were published. So, though he was well aware of the unpopularity of Valla both in literary and theological circles, it is quite possible that he was not informed as to his personal character, and therefore attributed to the learned critics of Valla an envy of his attainments which was in reality rather a contempt for his personality. For instance, in his letter to Cornelius Gerard, he says: "They gain nothing who object that the name of Valla is held by many in great odium; for high character is ever exposed to such malice. Valla does not please many; but who are they? Those forsooth who have no taste for polite literature." [8]

And in a letter to Christopher Fisher giving an account of the discovery of the manuscript of the *Annotations,* he sets himself to remove from Valla's name the odium generally attached to it:

> In the first place, therefore, if the generosity which we exact from others shall be manifested by ourselves in favor of those towards whom we not only ought not to be hostile, but rather friendly, then certainly the name of Valla, instead of being odious, should be gratefully reverenced by all who love good literature, since he purposely and wisely took upon himself that most unpleasant task of restoring our literature! . . . "But he is a dangerous fellow, and attacks everybody," you say. Do they thus call it an attack, to differ in matters of literature, and, in order to instruct, to suggest a very few amendments where you are praising so much? . . . Valla has dared to object to a little word in some of the authors. Monstrous crime! as if Aristotle did not censure everything in almost everyone; as if Brutus did not contemn the entire diction of Cicero; as did Caligula that of Livy and Ovid; as did Fabius and Aulus Gellius that of Seneca; as did Jerome that of Augustine and Rufinus; and as did Filelfo that of Quintilian. . . . Poggio—a brawler so illiterate, who even if he lacked obscenity would not be worth reading, but so obscene that, even if he were most learned, yet ought to be rejected by all good men—he, I say, just as if he were a noble fellow, and popular, is in everybody's hands and, translated into every language, is read and re-read. Valla, who is

[8] Eras. Ep. 26.

not obscene and is a hundredfold more learned, rests under the imputation of being mordant and sarcastic, and is avoided as a dangerous fellow, even by those who have never read the writings of the man.[9]

Evidently Erasmus was not so well informed of the private life and principles of Valla as he was of those of Poggio, or he would not have made the above comparison. And then he goes on to flay the divines because they objected to Valla's interfering with the accepted text of the Scriptures, never reflecting that they might have objected just as strongly to Poggio for a similar reason, if he had taken upon himself the task of correcting the Sacred Text. We cannot help but admire Erasmus' loyalty to the author who was of so much service to him in his youth for the acquisition of his great knowledge of Latin and the polishing of his style; and, had he known the facts about Valla that we have mentioned above, perhaps he would have been less angry with the world for not accepting that writer at his estimate, which was more the result of the sentiment arising from old association than anything else. But just as we know more about Erasmus himself than any of his contemporaries did, on account of having his private and intimate correspondence, so we know more about Valla than any of his early admirers, including Erasmus among the number, for the same reason.[10]

But Valla interests us here only because his manuscript of *Annotations on the New Testament,* which Erasmus had just met for the first time, gave the latter the idea of imitating Valla along similar lines, by putting his now considerable knowledge of Greek to use in elucidating and illustrating passages of Scripture which in the Vulgate seemed to him obscure; and eventually led to his retranslating and printing the whole New Testament. So, having properly edited the *Annotations,* he made a fair copy of it for the printer Josse Bade, a real scholar, who afterwards printed others of his works, and the work was issued in 1505, prefaced by a few lines to Erasmus from Bade which, as well as anything we might say, give the scope of the book:

In very truth, most learned Erasmus, I cannot help but assent to your candid and thoughtful judgment of our Valla; for, as he has merited the blame of no justly thinking man, so he has deserved the greatest favor and gratitude of every studious man. For if, as in matters of Christian doctrine St. Augustine rightly deemed, the things that are somewhat obscure and hard to understand in one language are illustrated and made plain by comparison with the same in another language, why should odium attach to any man who points out those instances in which the Latin copies differ at times, and at times totally vary? Unless perchance we are indignant with

[9] *Ibid.,* 182.

[10] We ought not to leave the subject of Valla without mentioning the admirable monograph on him written by Dr. Max von Wolf, *Lorenzo Valla, sein Leben und seine Werke* (Leipzig, 1893), which contains a thoughtful and concise analysis of his principal books, with many letters from hitherto unpublished correspondence.

him because he has relieved us from such a mighty task. But it is idle to be angry; and I only hope that your hunt [in the library of the monastery] will be as gratifying as it is delightful to all students of the Holy Scriptures. Farewell. Paris, March 7, 1505.[11]

This book was not a success when compared with the *Adagia* and most of his other works; and he himself did not value it highly, as he never included it in the catalogue of his works which he left after him in the care of John Botzheim. Indeed, the only reference that he ever made to the work in after years was to give utterance to a criticism unfavorable to Valla's book.[12]

It may well be that his studies incident to the editing of Valla's *Annotations on the New Testament* brought Colet insistently to his memory, since he had left him immersed in similar work on his departure from England. We deem this possible because, while he was at work on the book, he wrote Colet a long letter, the first that he had written him for four years. In it he congratulates him on being appointed Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, and also on his being honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Since it contains much of interest about his own works and occupations during this interval, and because anything referring to Colet has its own attractions, it will be profitable to give it in this place.

Most learned Colet:

Had our friendship arisen from ordinary causes, or had your character ever seemed to smack of the commonplace, I should have had much reason to fear that our mutual regard, after so long an interval of time and separation of space, might at least have grown cold, if it had not died out entirely. But since my admiration for your singular attainments and my love for your upright character have attached me to you, and the hope, or rather the fancy, that I possess the same qualities have attached you to me, I do not think I need fear that which often happens, that being out of your sight I should also be absent from your mind. Hence I would fain persuade myself that the fact of no letters coming to me from Colet was due either to your lack of time, or to your not knowing exactly my whereabouts, or to any cause whatsoever rather than to a forgetfulness of your old friend. But as I have neither the right nor the desire to find fault with your silence, yet I most earnestly beg and entreat you that hereafter you will steal a little leisure from your studies and business affairs to greet me occasionally with a letter. I am surprised that none of your commentaries on Paul and the Gospels has yet been published. I am well aware of your modesty; still it should be overcome and banished out of regard for the public good. On the title of D.D., and the honor of the Deanship, with

[11] Eras. Ep. 183.

[12] "Ab his progymnasmatis aggressus sum Nouum Testamentum; in quo decreueram adeo verborum parcus esse, vt statuerim singula loca tribus verbis annotare, praesertim quum Laurentii castigationem iam aedidissem, quae mihi verbosior quam pro re videbatur." (*Ibid.*, I, p. 14, l. 5.)

certain other dignities which I understand have been conferred on you besides, I congratulate not you, who will reap, I am sure, nothing for yourself but labor, but rather those for whom you will have to bear them, or rather the honors themselves, which indeed seem only worthy of the name when they have fallen to one who has well deserved them and yet sought them not.

I cannot well express to you, dearest Colet, with what energy I am giving myself to theology, how everything which calls me away, or even hinders me, from it is disgusting to me. But the frowns of Fortune, who ever looks at me askance, have been the reason for my inability to extricate myself from my present kind of trumpery effusions. It was with this idea that I went to France, so that if I were able to finish them I could certainly throw them aside by some means or other. Then freely and heartily I could apply myself to theology, with the purpose of spending the rest of my life therein. And yet about three years ago I mustered up courage enough to do some little work on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, and I finished at one time four chapters; I would have done more had not certain matters drawn me away from it, the most important of which was that here and there I very much felt the want of Greek. So for almost three years Greek literature has engrossed my attention entirely, and it seems to me that I have not altogether wasted my efforts. I began also to dabble in Hebrew, but, deterred by that outlandish tongue, together with the fact that no man's span of life or power of intellect suffices for the accomplishing of many things equally well, I gave it up. I have read a good share of Origen's works; and under his guidance I feel that I have gained something worth while, because he opens up the very sources of theological science, and indicates the methods to be pursued.

I send you as a slight literary gift a few of my smaller lucubrations, among them being the discussion on the agony of Christ, on which we differed when I was in England that time, but now so changed that you would hardly recognize it.[13] . . . All the rest I wrote against my will almost, especially the *Pæan* and the *Oration,*[14] in which I yielded to the inclination of my friend Batt and to the desires of Anna Lady of Veere. The *Panegyric* was so distasteful to me that I cannot remember having done anything more reluctantly. I saw plainly that that sort of thing could not be done without flattering; so I made use of a new scheme, viz., to be very frank in my flattery, and to be very flattering in my frankness.

If you wish any of your writings printed you have only to send me the copy, and I will see to the rest, so that it shall be faultlessly executed. I suppose you will remember that I wrote recently concerning the hundred copies of the *Adages* sent over to England

[13] He also mentions the *Enchiridion,* but we have given a translation of his remarks on that subject on a former page.

[14] *Pæan virgini matri dicendus,* and his *Oratio de virtute amplectenda.*

at my own expense now three years ago. Grocyn had written to me that he would see to it faithfully and diligently that they should be distributed in accordance with my desires; nor do I doubt that he has fulfilled his promises, as he is one of the most honest and reliable men whom England has ever produced. Kindly deign to give your own help in this matter, by reminding and spurring on those by whom you consider the business should be brought to an issue. There is no room for doubting that the books are sold after all this time, and surely some people must have the money, which would be of greater service to me just now than ever. For by some means or other I must bring it about that I may have a few months to myself, in which to get free from the tasks which I have set myself in profane literature; and I had hoped to accomplish that this winter, had not many hopes played me false. Since it is for only a very few months, this freedom will not demand the outlay of much money.

So I entreat you to help me as much as you can in the direction of those studies for which I so eagerly long, and free me from that kind of literature which has for some time ceased to be agreeable to my taste. I must not ask my friend Lord William Mountjoy; yet it would not be too unreasonable, should he assist me a little according to his usual kindness, either because he has always patronized my efforts in this way, or because a work was taken up on his advice and dedicated to his honor, namely, the *Adages*. I am sorry about the former edition both because it is so full of errors, due to the carelessness of the printers, that it would seem to have been spoiled on purpose, and because at the instigation of certain persons I hurried the work, which now at length begins to seem poor and meagre, since I have become conversant with the Greek authors. It has been decided, therefore, to correct my own and the printers' faults in another edition, and at the same time to consult the interests of the studious by improving a very useful work. Although I am in the meantime treating a subject which is perhaps somewhat humble, yet, while I am engaged in the gardens of the Greeks, I pluck in passing many a flower for use later even in sacred literature. One thing I do see plainly, that without Greek we amount to nothing in any sort of literature. For it is one thing to conjecture, another thing to be certain; one thing to see with your own eyes, another to trust to those of other people. See to what this letter has grown; but it is my affection and not any stupidity that makes me so loquacious. Farewell, most learned and most noble Colet.

I should very much like to learn news of our friend Sixtin, as also what your friend the Rev. Prior Richard Charnock is doing. In order that what you write or send me may more surely reach me, please let it be sent to Christopher Fisher, your very affectionate friend, and the patron of all literary men, in whose house I am staying. Paris, c. December, 1504.[15]

[15] Eras. Ep. 181.

CHAPTER XVI

SECOND VISIT TO ENGLAND; TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GREEK: NEW PATRONS

The reply of Colet to this letter must have been most prompt and reassuring to Erasmus' hopes, causing him to wind up speedily his business in Paris and to make all due preparations for another sojourn in England. At just what time he reached England is unknown, but it was probably in the late spring or early summer of 1505 that he had the pleasure of meeting again his former friends, and of making many new ones whose names we shall presently have occasion to mention. Since his last visit he had acquired a large knowledge of Greek, which he was not too modest to display for the edification of his learned friends, and for his own personal emolument. So we find him throwing off translations of various Greek authors and dedicating them to those about him who, he thought, might be of service and profit to him. Among such we find Lucian's *Toxaris,* dedicated to Richard Foxe, an influential bishop and statesman; the *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia* of Euripides, to Archbishop Warham; the *Declamation* in reply to Lucian's *Tyrannicida,* to Richard Whitford, then chaplain to Foxe; Lucian's *Timon,* to Thomas Ruthall, Dean of Salisbury; Lucian's *Gallus,* to Christopher Urswick, ambassador and Dean of Windsor; and possibly others.[1]

Of all these new friends Archbishop Warham proved to be the most munificent; and the favors which he bestowed on him show us plainly that the prelate appreciated the genius of the monk and fostered it magnificently. He was a kindly and noble character, and perhaps this is as good a place as any to give a slight sketch of him in connection with our subject. He was a graduate of Oxford and had qualified himself to practice law, after which he received an appointment from Henry VII to become secretary to an embassy to the Duke of Burgundy. Later he took Holy Orders, and rapid preferment followed: he was appointed in succession Bishop of London, Lord Chancellor, and Archbishop of Canterbury. Speaking of him after his death, Erasmus thus described him:

> Here there comes to my mind William Warham, a man worthy to be remembered in every age, who was Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of England. He was a theologian, not only in name, but also in reality, a doctor of both canon and civil law, a man who had successfully comported himself in foreign embassies, and who

[1] When Gibbon spoke of Erasmus' learning Greek at Oxford in order to teach it at Cambridge, he stated something which has no foundation in fact, for Erasmus had now been studying Greek for many years, and the works above mentioned are proofs of his acquirements in this direction.

was held in high estimation by Henry VII, a prince of the greatest perspicacity. By such degrees he was placed in the eminent See of Canterbury, the highest Church dignity in the island. To this burden, heavy in itself, was added another heavier still. He was forced to accept the office of Chancellor, an office, indeed, which among the English is truly regal, for, as an especial mark of honor, as often as he appears publicly, the royal crown and sceptre are borne before him. For he is as the eye, the tongue, and the right arm of the king, and the supreme judge of Britain. He filled this office for many years with such ability that you would set him down as one born to the office, and as thinking of nothing else. Yet likewise in the matters which pertain to religion and his Church functions, he was so vigilant and watchful that you would say no other extraneous matter could distract him from them. He found time to read his office religiously, to say mass almost every day, to hear, moreover, two or three masses, to examine causes, to receive embassies, to consult with the king if there was anything of moment transpiring at the palace, to visit churches if something had happened which required his decision, to dine with his guests, of whom there were often two hundred, and, finally, to give his leisure moments to reading. To such various cares he gave his attention and his time, of which no portion was wasted in hunting, gaming, trivial conversation, excess at table, or worldly pleasures. In place of all such pastimes he used to enjoy pleasant reading or the conversation of some learned man. Although at times he had as guests bishops, dukes, and earls, yet the dinner was always ended within the space of an hour. Amid the splendid retinue which the dignity of his position demanded, it was wonderful how little he gave himself to worldly pleasures. Rarely did he taste wine, but when he was past seventy he used to drink a weak beverage which they call beer, and this very sparingly. Yet, though so abstemious himself, he used to enliven the table by his pleasant countenance and his festive conversation. Whether he had dined or was fasting, you would have observed the same self-denial. From suppers he totally abstained; or if there happened in any close friends, such as ourselves, he sat at the table but took practically no food. If there were no such gathering, he gave the time usually taken by eating to prayer or to reading. But as he abounded in wit that was marvelously spontaneous yet without malice or absurdity, so he was delighted with the rather frank jesting of his friends; yet, withal, he shunned scurrility and slander as one would a snake. Thus this most illustrious man richly lengthened out his days, the brevity of which many rail against.[2]

This was written by Erasmus after the death of Warham in 1532, and we need add nothing to it except to relate the prelate's generosity to him. In a letter to Servatius, Erasmus said that Archbishop Warham "loved me so that were he my father or my brother he could not love me more;

[2] Erasmus, *Ecclesiastes*, p. 100. Lyons, 1543.

WILLIAM WARHAM, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
Holbein

and to show you the sincerity of his friendship, he hath given me a living worth about a hundred nobles, which at my request he hath since changed for a pension of a hundred pounds upon my resigning it. Within these few years, he hath given me more than four hundred nobles; one day he gave me a hundred and fifty." [3]

Warham was certainly a generous benefactor of Erasmus, and he rejoiced in giving, which is unusual. When sending Erasmus fifty gold angels to Cambridge, the good old soul added with a flash of wit, "I wish there were thirty legions of them." With Grocyn, Linacre, More, and Erasmus, he is regarded as one of the ardent admirers and supporters of the New Learning in England. But he did not regard Luther's disruption of the Church as at all necessary for the furtherance of the Renaissance. Since we shall have to refer to him frequently later in our work we need say no more about him here.

So, too, we must not forget John Fisher, the famous Bishop of Rochester, whom Erasmus held in similar affection. He was of about the same age as Erasmus and was educated at Cambridge. Having received Holy Orders, he was made chaplain to the King's mother, Margaret Countess of Richmond. In 1501 he became Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, and the following year was made professor of Divinity. In 1504 he was made Bishop of Rochester, and spent his life working for the interests of religion in general, and the universities in particular. He was opposed to Henry VIII's views in the matter of his divorce from Queen Katherine, and so Henry sought the earliest opportunity to send him to the block, an event which took place in 1535, and which caused Erasmus poignant grief for the loss of this lifelong friend. He aided Erasmus generously with money and encouragement, and their friendship lasted during the rest of their lives. Erasmus speaks highly of him whenever he has the opportunity, in one of his letters extolling his virtues as follows:

> The Bishop of Rochester, a man not only of wonderful integrity in life, but also of deep and unusual learning, approved equally by the lofty and the lowly for his remarkable kindness of manner, has ever honored me with his especial favor out of the abundance of his generosity, and unworthy though I was of such goodness.[4]

Another of his good English friends was William Grocyn. He was born in 1446, and was consequently twenty years older than Erasmus. Though he proved a real friend to him and helped him in financial matters, there was not the same degree of intimacy between the two that seemed to exist between Erasmus and those we have already mentioned, due probably to the disparity in their ages. Grocyn had been tutor to Warham when the latter was a student at Oxford, and Warham the Archbishop never forgot what Warham the student owed to Grocyn: as a consequence many church livings and preferments fell to the lot of his former tutor. In 1485 he was prebendary of Lincoln Cathedral, and in 1488 he went to Italy, where he spent two years in acquiring a

[3] Eras. Ep. 296, l. 122. [4] *Ibid.*, 252.

knowledge of the Greek language and literature as far as it was known at that time. He studied under Politian and the Greek Chalcondyles and on his return to England taught Greek at Oxford, where he was among the very first to instruct in that tongue. He lectured daily on this subject and, like Colet, asked no recompense, while Erasmus is our authority for stating that all the chief scholars of the University attended his lectures. This was in 1491. When Erasmus arrived on his first visit to Oxford in 1499, he found Grocyn closely associated with Linacre in spreading the light of the New Learning in the University. Erasmus early noted that, in spite of being devoted to the classical Renaissance, he still adhered to the mediæval Schoolmen. His preference for Aristotle over Plato was frequently a matter of comment, and in his religious views he seems to have been more inclined to conservatism than any of his scholarly friends. He wrote a letter to his friend Aldus Manutius, the celebrated Venetian printer, in which he thanks him for his kind treatment of their common friend Linacre, and goes on to congratulate him on his preparing an edition of Aristotle before approaching an edition of Plato. "For my own part," he says, "I think the difference between these two philosophers is simply the difference between πολυμαθῆ and πολυμυθῆ; that is, between erudition and verbosity. Colet loved him, and often succeeded in getting him to appear before his scholars of St. Paul's school, there to address the tyros in Latin. But it was Grocyn, whom Erasmus called the best and most upright of all the Britons, who introduced him to Warham. He also said that when in London he lived at the expense of Grocyn, "the patron and preceptor of us all." Grocyn was known as a bright talker, very witty, fond of a jest, but always expressing himself briefly and to the point. He died in 1519.[5]

Thomas Linacre must not be forgotten in any list of the friends of Erasmus. He was born about 1460, and hence was only six years older than our subject. He received his preliminary education under William de Selling, afterwards Prior of the monastery school of Christ Church, Canterbury. De Selling had traveled in Italy as ambassador of Henry VII and had acquired a knowledge of Greek, and his learned tastes had exercised a deep influence on his pupil Linacre. The latter went to Oxford when he was twenty years old, and there met Grocyn and William Latimer, both well known afterwards as expounders of Greek. He then went to Italy in the suite of his old tutor De Selling, who had again been sent on an embassy, and there he met Poliziano and Lorenzo de'Medici, Lorenzo appointing him to share in giving instruction to the young Medicean princes Piero and Giovanni de'Medici, the latter of whom afterwards became the famous Pope Leo X. Leo never forgot Linacre and extended to him many privileges. While reading a manuscript of Plato in the Vatican Library at Rome, Linacre met Hermolaus Barbarus. It is possible that from Hermolaus he acquired his love for the study of Aristotle, Dioscorides, Pliny, and other medical writers. From Rome he went to Padua where he won his degree of Doctor of Medicine, and from there he wandered on to Venice, where he met Aldus

[5] For further facts about this early friend of Erasmus, see *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*, Vol. XXIII.

Manutius, who afterwards printed Linacre's own translation of Proclus *de Sphaera,* which appeared in 1499. He stayed in Italy for probably six years. After holding benefices in the Church for several years though not a priest, he received Holy Orders in 1520. In the dedication of one of his books to Archbishop Warham, Linacre says that he became a priest in order to obtain leisure for literary work. At his death, which occurred in 1524, he was very wealthy, as a result of the many livings with which he had been presented. Whether this custom of buying and selling livings, or the reversal of livings, was a good or a bad one, we leave to the decision of each reader. Erasmus, however, profited by the custom, but not to the extent to which Linacre did. It was a custom not limited to the Church, moreover, for the clerkships and some of the higher offices of the law were farmed out in a similar manner.[6] But from the sources of their revenues the Church livings were more numerous and attractive than any others, and it often happened that a Cardinal in Rome might hold a bishopric in France and an abbacy in England, the number of benefices he held being limited only by the will of the Pope.

We might go on and mention many more of the friends whom Erasmus made on this English visit, but since each will merit separate attention later on, we shall not trouble the reader further at present. We must remark, however, that, coming into England a comparative stranger, Erasmus must have had more than his learning to recommend him to these great and illustrious men. What this was we are somewhat at a loss to guess, but it is very probable, as we have before intimated, that it was his sparkling conversation, seasoned with wit and a sort of subtle flattery, of which he was master. Whatever it was, England opened her arms to him, and he was received, fêted, and lauded in all circles of Britain's learned and intellectual society, attracting to himself with ease the men we have described, each of whom was great in his own special way, but all of whom were remarkable for piety and simplicity of life, and a wisdom and ability which raised them above their compeers.

Now at last Fortune seemed to smile on him, and fame and money were at length his. When he wrote to Prior Servatius that he had come to England seeking not money but learning, the statement was not perfectly true, for many years afterwards, when writing his catalogue of lucubrations for John Botzheim, he expressly says that he was tempted to England by both literature and the mountains of gold there.[7] But, as we already know, he had to be very careful when writing to Steyn, where every word was carefully scrutinized; so we may take his statement to the Prior as a rhetorical flourish calculated to lull any uneasiness which might exist there in his regard.

During all the years that had elapsed since he had left the employment of the Bishop of Cambrai, he had never for a moment lost sight of his long-cherished dream of visiting Italy. It was doubtless part of his

[6] See life of James Howell in *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*

[7] "Deinde vbi literis ac montibus, quod aiunt, aureis amicorum pellectus redissem in Angliam," etc. (Eras. Ep. I.)

purpose in coming to England a second time, to amass funds for the attainment of this object; and he ultimately succeeded in accomplishing it, as we shall soon see. With almost feverish energy he devoted himself to his pen, throwing off translations from the Greek authors who were then all the rage, and dedicating his finished productions to those of his acquaintances among the wealthy whose patronage seemed to him most promising from a financial point of view. He conceived, therefore, that it would be no bad stroke of policy to send as a New Year's gift to the powerful Bishop of Winchester, Richard Foxe, who at that time was also Lord Privy Seal, his translation of Lucian's *Toxaris,* with a pretty dedication, a few lines of which we will quote to show how gracefully he could perform this difficult task without seeming to be too suppliant:

> Most illustrious father:
>
> It has been a custom, handed down to us of the present day from remote antiquity, to send, on the Calends of January, on the first day of the new year, certain little gifts which are believed to carry with them some sort of good luck both to the giver and the receiver. Hence, when I cast about to see what in the way of a gift I myself might send to so great a patron and so powerful a friend, and when I discovered nothing in my belongings beyond mere papers, I was compelled perforce to send you a New Year's gift on paper. Still, what more appropriate gift could be sent by a scholar to a dignitary of the Church who is most abundantly supplied with all the gifts of Fortune, but who infinitely prefers virtue and its concomitant—polite learning; and who, while he accepts the gifts of Fortune indifferently, as it were, and I had almost said unwillingly, yet, on the other hand, although he is most affluently endowed with mental treasures, still constantly desires to grow ever richer therein?

Then he goes on to describe his little gift, of which it is evident that he is very far from being ashamed, and finishes his epistle thus:

> Accept, therefore, from your humble client, this little New Year's gift, such as it is, most illustrious father, for good luck; and continue to love, command, and assist Erasmus, as you have already done. Farewell. London, January 1, 1506.[8]

In a similar fashion he dedicated his translation of Euripides' *Hecuba* to Archbishop Warham, who thus far had not taken much notice of the Dutch scholar. After describing to him the peculiar difficulties that Greek poetry offers to the translator, and the efforts that Poliziano, Francisco Filelfo, and others had made in the turning of good Greek into good Latin verse, he goes on to recommend himself to this possible patron as follows:

> So, most excellent father, I am led most certainly to expect that this effort of mine shall not only be uncommonly well secured against the calumnies of the unfriendly, but shall moreover be very well

[8] *Ibid.,* 187.

received by the just and fair-minded, if it be approved by you whom I have unhesitatingly chosen from so great a number of accomplished dignitaries as the one to whom I might dedicate the results of my nightly labors, since I perceive that, besides the lofty splendor of your fortune, you are so endowed, adorned, and equipped with learning, eloquence, prudence, piety, modesty, integrity, and, finally, with such a remarkable feeling of kindness towards those engaged in the promotion of learning, that the title of Primate befits no one so much as yourself, who hold the Primacy not only by the dignity of the office, but much more indeed by reason of all your high qualities, which likewise make you the chief ornament of the royal palace and the unique support of the ecclesiastical dignity. Hence, if it shall fall to my lot to have this work of mine approved by so illustrious a man, I shall assuredly not regret the hitherto wearying labor, nor shall I regard it as a burden henceforth to promote with some greater effort of mine the study of theology.

Farewell, and inscribe Erasmus in the number of those who are cordially devoted to your fatherly kindness. London, January 24, 1506.[9]

Ordinary men would have been carried off their feet by such fulsome compliments, phrased in the classic and flowing periods of Augustan Latinity, and have sought to return monetary measure for value received. Not so the Archbishop, and this will show us that he was just as modest and unostentatious in what concerned him personally as his contemporaries declare him to have been. Although he accepted the dedication and recognized the gift with a small present very gracefully and tactfully offered, yet he was in no way effusive in his thanks. Erasmus tells a rather entertaining story of the affair, which, as being illustrative of the characters of both himself and the Archbishop, is of interest. Grocyn had brought him to the Archbishop's palace at Lambeth for the purpose of presenting the *Hecuba* to the prelate, and Erasmus describes the meeting as follows:

After he had greeted me in a few words before the dinner, for I am not at all a loquacious or obsequious person, and after having again spoken with me briefly after the repast, as he is most simple in manner, he dismissed me with an honorary douceur, which, in accordance with his custom, he gave me privately, so as not to wound my modesty or expose me to envy in accepting it. This took place at Lambeth. While we were returning thence by boat, as the custom is there, Grocyn asked me how much of a gift I had received. Jokingly, I said, "An enormous sum." When he began to laugh I asked the cause of his mirth, and inquired whether he did not believe the prelate to be spirited enough to give so large an amount, or his fortune to be so small that it could not stand such generosity, or my book unworthy of any considerable gift. At length I told him the amount of the present, and, when I laughingly asked him why the Archbishop had given such a trifle, he replied after much urging

[9] *Ibid.*, 188.

that none of these conjectures was the truth, but that there was a suspicion in the prelate's mind that perchance I had already dedicated it to someone elsewhere. I was very much surprised at this statement and, when I asked how this suspicion could enter the mind of such a man, he replied, laughing, but with a very sardonic smile, "Because such is your custom," indicating thereby that this was often done by men of my stamp. Since the sting of such a biting remark rankled in my mind, which was not used to such things, just as soon as I reached Paris on my way to Italy I gave the work to Badius to be printed, having added to it the *Iphigenia in Aulis,* which I had translated somewhat more freely and diffusely while visiting England, and when I sent this work also to the Archbishop, I dedicated both effusions to him. That was the satisfaction I gave myself for Grocyn's witticism, at a time when I had no idea of ever visiting England again, nor ever meditated applying to the Archbishop for assistance, but was as proud as I was poor.[10]

But the Archbishop was no niggard, as Erasmus had soon occasion to know; and in writing to Prior Servatius, as we have already seen, he dilated on the overwhelming generosity of the good prelate, which indeed was of so great an amount, and given at so critical a time in the career of Erasmus, that William Warham has earned the gratitude of the learned world for thus coming to the assistance of one of its greatest lights, and his name will ever be mentioned with honor along with those of the Bishop of Cambrai, the Marchioness of Veere, and Lord Mountjoy. Gift after gift fell to our learned monk from this munificent prelate, so that at last he was not only able to realize his dream of a visit to Italy, but was evermore secured against poverty and its accompanying humiliations.

On his former visit to England most of his known associations had been with Oxford men, such as Colet, Grocyn, Linacre, Warham, More, and Latimer; but on the present occasion his acquaintance with Cambridge men became more general, and hence we find him paying court to John Fisher, Richard Foxe, Christopher Urswick, Richard Whitford, Thomas Ruthall, and others more or less connected with that University. Of these undoubtedly the most influential was John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who held the offices of President of Queen's College together with that of Chancellor of the University, in addition to being the confessor of the King's mother, the Lady Margaret Tudor, and her chief adviser in the founding of new colleges at Cambridge and additional professorships of Divinity in both universities. From his standing in the University it is quite probable that it was through him that Cambridge conferred the degree of Bachelor of Divinity on Erasmus about this time; and we may also attribute to Fisher's influence the appointment of Erasmus to one of the professorships of Divinity above mentioned, which appointment was given to him in 1511. That Fisher was a generous friend to Erasmus we have every reason to believe, since he furnished him with money, and had him to live at Queen's College,

[10] *Ibid.,* I, p. 5, l. 6.

Cambridge, where the rooms Erasmus occupied and the garden in which he walked are still pointed out to visitors.

Were it not for Erasmus we should know but little about the more human characteristics of some of these great Englishmen with whom he lived so intimately; and this is what gives his letters their especial value to students of the men and times immediately preceding the Reformation. The personal touch, the illuminating remark, the swift sketch of individualities, the lively comment, the pungent phrase which is worth a whole page of description: all these qualities and a thousand others go to make the letters of Erasmus more enlightening than whole tomes of contemporary history. Listen to what he says of Thomas More in one of his prefaces,[11] and all his prefaces are just letters to friends:

> Dearest Richard [Whitford]: Although I have now for many years been immersed in Greek literature, I have recently begun to declaim in Latin, in order that I might again regain favor with that tongue, and this at the instigation of Thomas More, whose eloquence is such (as you know) that he could win over even an enemy; a man whom I hold so dear that, if he were to command me to dance and play ring-around-a-rosy, I should obey him with pleasure. He is treating this same subject, and so treats it that there is not an atom therein that he does not search out and investigate. Unless my extreme regard for him deceive me, I do not think that Nature ever fashioned a more able, ready, aware, or subtle character, or, in a word, one better endowed with good qualities of all kinds. Add to this conversational powers commensurate with his genius, wonderful gayety of manner, abundance of wit, but kindly withal, so that you could wish in him nothing else that pertains to the finished advocate.
>
> I have not undertaken this task with the idea that I might either equal or surpass such a masterly speaker, but only that I might engage in a battle of minds with this sweetest of all my friends, with whom I am wont so agreeably to mingle the serious with the playful. And I have set myself about this all the more willingly for the reason that I am very desirous that this sort of exercise, than which there is nothing else equally profitable, should at length be restored to our schools. For I see no other reason than this why, in these days of ours, though there are many who turn out to be most eloquent writers, there are so few who do not seem to be actually dumb, whenever the matter in hand demands an orator. Because if, following the advice of Cicero and Fabius, as well as the example of the ancients, we were diligently exercised from childhood in this sort of declamatory practice, there would not be, in my opinion, so great a lack of oratory, so regrettable a state of dumbness, so shameful a condition of halting speech, even in those who make a public profession of oratory.
>
> I want you to read my *Declamation* with the thought that it was

[11] Erasmus: *Luciani Tyrannicida,* Dedication.

> the result of a few days' trifling, and not a labored composition. I wish you would compare it with More's, so that you may be able to judge whether there is any difference in style between him and myself, two men who are so similar, you are wont to say, in thought, manners, disposition, and love of study, that you deny twin brothers could be found more alike. You certainly love us both equally well, and are equally beloved by us in return. Farewell, my delightful and most jovial Richard. The Country, May 1, 1506.[12]

Thus with a few strokes of his literary brush he limns for us a portrait of one aspect of More's many-sided genius which stays with us persistently after much else that we have read of him has been forgotten. Erasmus respected and esteemed all the great Englishmen whose names we have mentioned, but in the case of Thomas More it was more than respect and esteem that he felt: it was real affection. And this affection was returned by More to the very last day of his existence; and perhaps the saddest moment of Erasmus' whole life was when he heard the news that his beloved friend had perished on the scaffold at the hands of the truculent Henry VIII. But that event is still almost thirty years in the future, and we shall have yet many occasions to speak of More before we arrive at that lamentable time.

We can plainly see that visiting from one house to another and having no settled place of residence was not conducive to the doing of original work; and as a consequence we observe that during his English trip Erasmus confined himself entirely to translations from the Greek, which he used as some sort of payment for the gratuities which he received, by dedicating them to his patrons. In this way he expressed his gratitude to Warham, Whitford, Foxe, Ruthall, Urswick, and possibly others.

We gather from the tone of his letters that his Italian trip was now secure, from the financial standpoint, and that, in addition, another piece of good luck fell in his way to spare his pockets, namely, his selection by the King's physician, John Baptista Boerio, to accompany his two sons to Italy and there supervise their education. Boerio was an Italian physician who had settled in England, and who by his reputation had won the post of physician to Henry VII and afterwards to Henry VIII. This appointment enabled Erasmus to make the grand tour luxuriously and at practically no trouble or expense to himself. His duties towards the two boys were light, as the real work of tutoring them was in the hands of an Englishman named Clyfton who accompanied the party for that purpose. So with a light heart and a heavy purse he bade good-bye to his English friends, and turned his face towards Italy, the goal of his aspirations for now many years. To meet face to face the scholars and celebrated characters of that classic land, and to measure himself intellectually with men whose names had been familiar to him since his youth, was undoubtedly one of the objects nearest his heart. We may assume that another object was the necessity of making friends for himself in the highest Church circles, who might

[12] Eras. Ep. 191.

be of service to him in times to come; for he already foresaw that he might need such. It is probable that the memory of Steyn, of his superiors, and of his vow of obedience, were seldom absent for long from his mind. The period had long expired within which he had promised to win his Doctor's degree and then return to the seclusion of his monastery; and though he tells us that his brethren were not in sympathy with his literary tastes and desires, being stupid and ignorant, and turning up their noses at his writings, there is a bare possibility that Erasmus is exaggerating, as he so often did when matters touched him nearly; and that his brethren did not despise his work, but could not see why, like William Herman, Cornelius Gerard, and so many other monks of the day, he could not do this sort of work equally well in his monastery, instead of traveling over Europe without leave or guidance. It was a most irregular proceeding, and he knew it; and accordingly lived in apprehension. Hence his desire to make friends of the great and powerful in ecclesiastical circles, and the guarded and measured tones that he maintained in his correspondence with his superiors, were part of his plan to shake off eventually his bondage to Steyn and his haunting fear of being sooner or later compelled to return to the regular life of the monastery. We are permitted to assume that he corresponded with them as little as possible, and we know that he did not ask for permission to make radical changes in his domicile or mode of life, but briefly and cautiously informed them of the fact after it was accomplished. He sought to avoid friction with them as much as possible, and kept away from them on various pretexts.

So with his companions Erasmus crossed over to Calais in the early part of June, 1506, and called on Lord Mountjoy—who was then Governor of that castle on behalf of England, as this was part of the French territory which at this time belonged to that country—since their course to Paris lay in this direction. The passage across the Channel proved stormy, but he lingered only long enough with his friend Mountjoy to get rid of his seasickness, then hastened on to Paris where he had much business to transact with printers and proof-readers. On his arrival there he sent rather an entertaining letter to Linacre in London, which, since it gives us some details not elsewhere set down, we shall here translate:

> I have arrived in Paris safe in every respect, except that, having caught cold during the troublous four days' voyage, I contracted some sort of malady which even now is racking my head terribly. The glands under both my ears are swollen, my temples are throbbing, both my ears are ringing; and meanwhile there is no Linacre at hand to relieve me by his skill. My Italian contract has already cost me this much. For never did I resolve on anything more firmly in my life than never to commit myself to the winds and waves when I could travel by land.
>
> To the French I appear to have risen from the dead, for there was a constant and persistent rumor here that Erasmus had gone to the realms above. I suppose the error arose from the death of

the Frenchman Milo, since he also had left France and entered the service of Mountjoy, but, being smitten by the plague shortly after arriving, died there. As to this being ominous I am nothing moved, but I certainly owe it to this mistake that I have been given a foretaste of what they will say of me when I am dead. I find France so charming on my return that I am in doubt whether Britain, which has yielded me so many and such dear friends, more delights my mind than France, with its old friends, its freedom, its partiality and its delightful affection towards me. Hence I am permeated with a double pleasure, as it were, since I equally rejoice in remembering my English acquaintances whom I hope to see soon again, and in seeing once more my friends in France.

You could not avoid laughing if you know how greedily my little Greek has been awaiting the δῶρον [gift] which I had promised him in return for the Cyprian reed-pens, how often he reminds me of the δῶρον, and how often he finds fault because it has not been sent. In truth it amuses me to have so deluded that open-mouthed little crow, for the stupid fellow does not perceive that I wrote him in this sense: πέμψω δῶρόν τι ἄξιόν σου, that is, something worthless " like yourself" and be hanged to you.

I hope my task of educating the children of Boerio will turn out happily. And indeed I see that the boys are intelligent, modest, and docile, and already beyond their years in knowledge, while there is no one more upright, affectionate, or obliging than Clyfton their governor.

Farewell, wisest and kindest of preceptors, and write as often as possible to me, even though only a few words. Paris, c. June 12, 1506.[18]

To another friend, Roger Wentford, master of the largest school in London at that time, St. Anthony's in Threadneedle Street, who had evidently showed him various kindnesses the nature of which is unknown to us, he wrote a letter immediately on his arrival in Paris, but as it is principally concerned with his trip across the Channel, and couched in a strain similar to that of Linacre's which we have just quoted, we need not dwell on it. The same disposition may be made of the letter to John Colet which he wrote and dispatched on the same day, and for the same reason. One sentence in the *Pseudomantis,* which he dedicated and sent to René d'Illiers during this busy time in Paris, leads us to insert the preface in full, though fortunately it is very short:

Most illustrious father: Since I have discovered in many ways how generously you, a man of fine discernment in so many regards, feel towards my scanty talent and my trivial writings, and, being on the point of setting out for Italy, and desiring that you might have something to remind you of your friend Erasmus, I have sent to you the *Pseudomantis* of Lucian, a most rascally fellow, but than whom there is no one more useful in detecting and exposing the impostures of those individuals who, even nowadays, are wont to

[18] *Ibid.*, 194.

deceive the public with miracles worked by magic, with fictitious piety, with pretended pardons, or similar juggleries. I hope therefore that you will read him not only with some little profit, but also with the greatest of pleasure, for the reason that you, your Lordship, in addition to the reputation of your race, the splendor of your fortune, and the dignity of your office, are a complete master in the grave and the serious sort of studies; nevertheless, on account of the extreme jocundity of your heart and the marvelous suavity of your disposition, you are not averse to these more elegant Muses, but willingly mingle such profitable trifles as these with your more arduous studies. As for the matter of wit, whether of the bitter sort which they ascribe to Momus, or the more kindly flavor which they attribute to Mercury, you will find every kind most copiously in this fellow Lucian.

It is impossible for me to express how sorry I am at the burning of so magnificent and renowned a cathedral as that of Chartres as a result of being struck by lightning. Farewell. Paris, August ⟨init.⟩, 1506.[14]

Thus early can we detect the nature of his admiration for Lucian, as for a man who was greatly daring and who did not hesitate to point out the glaring defects, not of religion, but of those who were selected to dispense its benefits to the multitude. Whether Lucian accomplished the aim he had in view in writing his satires is uncertain; what success Erasmus had in a similar endeavor remains to be pointed out in its proper place.

His Italian journey was delayed from time to time, and it was at least two months before he was ready to leave Paris. It would seem that he was engaged during this interval in seeing his translations from Euripides and Lucian through the press of Badius, and in giving the finishing touches to a new edition of his *Adages,* which appeared in the following December, after his arrival in Italy. He must have had a peculiar regard for this work, for it was by it that he first won his reputation for learning and research, not only among the circle of his friends, but, more important by far, among scholars everywhere. The first edition which had appeared in 1500 contained 818 adages culled from the Latin and Greek languages and adorned with quaint and illuminating comments by Erasmus himself. While he was in England on his recent visit, his old publisher, J. Philippe, had issued a second edition (1505) which evidently did not please him, for on arriving in Paris he proceeded to engage Josse Badius, another printer and native Brabantian, to bring out a further edition, which hence is the third. This Erasmus amplified with twenty additional adages, and so is explained part of the delay in Paris before he proceeded to Italy. We might state here incidentally that in spite of his utmost care to safeguard his right to the profits which might accrue to him from his writings, at a time when such a thing as copyright was undreamed of, two pirated editions of his *Adages* were issued almost under his very eyes, one

[14] *Ibid.,* 199.

by Dion. Roce, which appeared in Paris in this very year, and one by Nicolas de Pratis, very early in the next year. The booksellers had been robbing him of the fruits of his labors while he had been visiting in England, and when he reached Paris he was confronted with a collection of his epigrams which had just been printed and published by J. Barbier, on March 18, 1506, under the title of *Varia Epigrammata.* He immediately engaged Badius to get out a newer and better edition, the printing of which he himself supervised, and the work was issued on January 8, 1507, shortly after his arrival in Italy. This was probably early enough to forestall still another edition of this work which was issued from the press of Nic. de Pratis in this same year. He also revised and prepared for the press another edition of his *Panegyric.* So we may readily imagine that, though the pirate printers may have robbed him of his serenity, they did not paralyze his industry.

All this period of delay was very annoying to him, for he was living in momentary dread that the sword of Damocles, which Steyn seemed ever to be holding over him, would drop at last and cut off his hopes of liberty to go to Italy, or wherever else his interest lay. We already know that the principal object which his superiors at Steyn had in view in permitting him to absent himself from the monastery in order to attend the lectures at the University of Paris, was to have him take the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology, an honor which would redound not only to his credit, but also to that of the community at Steyn. This is expressly stated in some of his letters and implied in others which we have already quoted.[15] But, after deciding to make literature the work of his life, which he did very noticeably after leaving the College of Montaigu, he seemed to make little or no effort to win a degree at the University of Paris. On the contrary, his desire and fixed intention were to take it at the University of Bologna, whenever he should make his long-desired journey to Italy, at least that is what he told his superiors at Steyn as we learn from William Herman's letter to Servatius as far back as 1499.[16] And we remember that a few months after that time, when writing to the Lady of Veere, he said:

> I feel for some time past that two things are necessary for me: first, that I should visit Italy in order that the little learning I possess may acquire some prestige from the celebrity of that country; and, second, that I may dub myself Doctor, both of which things are foolish.[17]

Erasmus may or may not have meant this to be taken at its full value, but if he did, then we must agree with Feugère that he did not have the courage of his convictions.[18]

Now, we glean from all this that lack of money was one reason for his not having taken his degree hitherto; but it was not the only reason

[15] See *Ibid.*, 48, 77.
[16] *Ibid.*, 92.
[17] *Ibid.*, 145.
[18] Malgré tout, il est des préjugés que ne brave pas ouvertement dans sa conduite celui même qui les raille dans ses discours." (*Etude sur Erasme,* p. 28.)

by far. We realize now that the taking of his degree, during any of these years from 1496 onwards, would have meant his return to the community at Steyn and the resumption of his monastic obligations just where he had laid them down when he was permitted to take service as secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai. Although the fees attendant on taking degrees in the University of Paris were undoubtedly heavy, yet we feel that some stronger and more cogent cause than mere lack of money must have actuated him, such an accomplished borrower, in following out what was certainly a masterly Fabian policy. And what more potent reason than the one we have just given? Who that knows anything of the fierce and intense hatred that he nursed in his breast all his days against the monastic life in general can doubt that he would take any means, have recourse to any plan, which would prevent his being brought back to what in his estimation, and as it related to him personally, was only perpetual isolation? We have the subconscious feeling that he had all these years been biding his time until he had secured such fame and standing that he could make a strike for personal freedom from the trammels in which his vow had placed him. So he used the taking of the degree as a measure of security. As long as he did not take it, he was saved from a return to the monastery within certain limits; but once he had taken it, there was no longer any reason he could offer to the authorities at Steyn which would be sufficiently potent to save him from a speedy and permanent resumption of his monastic duties. Hence he played the University of Bologna against the University of Paris. There might perhaps be advanced another reason why he did not take his degree in the University of Paris, namely, that he might have made enemies for himself in the Faculty of Theology by his biting remarks on Scholastic Theology as taught there, or by some equally imprudent remarks, either written or spoken, at which the learned theologians of the University might have taken umbrage. And no one knew any better than Erasmus that, if such a body as the examiners of that institution desired to flesh a grudge against him, they had here a splendid opportunity to do so. While all these reasons may have had a share in causing him to defer taking the degree, the present writer is convinced that the fear of being recalled to Steyn was the controlling motive.

After the visit to his brethren in 1501, he had gone back to Paris ostensibly for his final year, but the next time the community at Steyn heard of him was when he wrote to them from England, telling them of all the fine friends he had met, and what they had offered to do for him. After getting back to Paris, instead of going to work to win the degree, he started publishing books like the *Adages,* which presumably made the authorities at Steyn open their eyes in astonishment that their errant brother was grown so great in the learned world, and gave them pause as to what course was best to pursue concerning him. But, before they could come to a decisive conclusion, he disarmed any possible displeasure they might feel against him by establishing himself at the neighboring University of Louvain. We may suppose that now their minds were at rest for the time being, but they were not permitted to

be so for long, for the very next news they had of him was that he was again in England, as we have already related. From there he wrote them that he was much appreciated by the British, but that worldly honors do not attract him, and that since now he has acquired a sufficiency of Greek he will devote himself in earnest to the affairs of his soul. But he did not say that he would return to the monastery. On the contrary, when next Prior Servatius heard from him, he was in Italy.

CHAPTER XVII

VISIT TO ITALY: THE DOCTOR'S DEGREE

But at last he was ready to start; so stopping on the road to visit an old friend, Nicholas Beraud, at Orléans, he proceeded to Lyons, where he enjoyed himself very well indeed, if the first part of his colloquy *Diuersoria* was at all prompted by the remembrance thereof—which is more than probable. Thence he traveled through Savoy, and took the Mount Cenis Pass over the Alps, which brought him nearest to his destination, viz., Turin, fifty-four miles away over the Italian border, and there he and his party halted. He tells a rather amazing story of a quarrel which occurred between two members of his party while crossing the Alps. We find the story in the catalogue of his works given to John Botzheim and we at once recognize therein the true literary instinct which knew how to enliven a dry collection of titles with interesting anecdote and personal relation.

> While passing over the Alps during my journey to Italy, I wrote a poem on *Old Age,* dedicated to William Cop. There fell out a disgusting quarrel between the dispatch bearer of the King of England, who was accompanying us as far as Bologna for our protection, and the governor of the youths whom I was inveigled, by a contract like a snare, into conducting into Italy, not indeed as their pedagogue, for I had declined to attend to their conduct, nor as their preceptor, but that I might at the proper time look over their courses of study, unluckily for myself, alas, for never did I spend a year more unpleasantly. To such a heat did the quarrel rise between these two fellows that from furious invectives they came to drawn swords, and for myself I was angry with both of them equally. But when I saw them afterwards over their cups, the best of friends after such a tempest, I despised them both alike. For as I consider men must be insane who would thus rage unless terribly exasperated, so I deem no reliance could be placed on those who would become friends so quickly after such dire anger. So in order to relieve the tedium of riding, cutting loose from all converse with both parties, I wrote this poem, jotting it down from time to time on paper spread over my saddlebags, so that I might lose none of it while excogitating the rest. From my notes I copied it out at length just as it is, when we arrived at an inn. So you have my equestrian or rather my Alpestrian poem, which some learned men declare to be not entirely devoid of merit, whatever was its origin.[1]

After this fashion they crossed the Alps and finally arrived at the prosperous and friendly city of Turin, the object of their journey being

[1] Eras. Ep. I, p. 4, l. 8.

to stop here for the purpose of having its young and vigorous University confer on Erasmus and Clyfton its degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology. As far as we can judge, this Clyfton was one of the parties to the quarrel mentioned above, which may well make us hesitate in believing all that Erasmus tells us of this man; for if he had been selected by the father of the boys as their tutor, and if he had aspirations high enough to make him seek a doctorate, then he was no brawler. It was a fearful thing at any time to incur Erasmus' displeasure, and evidently this was Clyfton's misfortune, for it resulted in his being impaled on the needle of the great satirist's scorn, and thus held up to the laughter of men. And yet not more than two months had elapsed since he told Linacre that there was nothing more candid, nothing more amiable, nothing more obliging than this same Clyfton. Shall we believe Philip drunk or Philip sober?

Emerton makes a very true and suggestive comment about Erasmus on his trip through the Alps. He notices that, although the journey was made through some of the grandest and most stupendous of Nature's wonders, there is not one word in any of the great man's letters to show that he was even conscious of their presence, and, though he was engaged in writing constantly during the whole period, he could find nothing better to write about than his approaching old age, of which he had been reminded by discovering some gray hairs on his temples. The explanation is easy if we remember that he had a purely subjective nature.

After the ceremony of receiving the degree at Turin, they hastened on to Bologna, but found their progress blocked by the troops of Pope Julius II who were besieging, and those of Bentivoglio who were defending, that unfortunate city. So Erasmus decided to go on to Florence, from which city he announced his arrival in Italy to Prior Servatius at Steyn. He made this announcement in a short, curt note in which there seemed somewhat of challenge. He was there apparently without permission, but his note seems to say that he was there in any case, and they could make the best of it. Then, as if to soften this, he informs them that he has got his degree, although he has taken it just to satisfy them, and is not at all proud of it.

> I have come to Italy for many reasons, although I find it disturbed by the tumults of war: so much so that, since the Pope together with the French troops is preparing to besiege Bologna, I have been compelled to betake myself in haste to Florence. But because a reliable report has come that Bentivoglio with his three sons has been captured by the French while fleeing, I am returning to Bologna, now that things have become, I trust, quiet. For the Pope with his Cardinals is to pass the winter there.
>
> I have received a Doctor's degree in Sacred Theology, and this entirely against my own judgment, but overborne by the importunities of my friends. I shall see you next summer, I hope. Goodbye. Florence, November 4, 1506.[2]

[2] *Ibid.*, 200.

His mind was evidently uneasy as to whether he had been explicit enough in his letter to the Prior, so he writes to him twelve days afterwards, and tells him that Greek was one of the reasons that brought him to Italy, apparently forgetting that in his letter from London he had written that he had enough of Greek:

> Although I recently wrote you from Florence, yet I will write you again on the same topics, since letters are often lost on such a long journey. I came to Italy most especially for the sake of Greek; but here and now studies are cold and wars are hot; for which reason I shall be anxious to fly back all the sooner. I received a Doctor's degree in Theology, not at all according to my own judgment, but compelled thereto by others.
>
> Bentivoglio has fled Bologna. The French had besieged the city, but were repulsed by the citizens with the loss of a few men. On St. Martin's Day Julius the Supreme Pontiff entered Bologna, and on the following Sunday he celebrated Mass in the Cathedral. The arrival of the Emperor is expected, and an expedition is being prepared against the Venetians, unless they yield up the places belonging to the Pontiff. Meanwhile there is a holiday from study. Farewell. Bologna, November 16, 1506.[3]

Now, although he says that he took his degree against his will, he evidently lost no time in making use of it, since he wrote Badius, his Paris publisher, to inform him of the fact. Badius was just issuing the Lucian dialogues, but stopped the press long enough to insert at the end:

> You have here, studious reader, several dialogues of Lucian, turned into the most elegant Latin by Erasmus of Rotterdam, a most learned man, who has been recently honored with the degree and laurel in Sacred Theology.[4]

But on reaching Bologna, and perceiving the greater reputation of the older university, he became dissatisfied with his degree from Turin, and, as we have seen, wrote to Servatius and Obrecht that he had taken it at the urging of others and against his own judgment. In view of this remarkable statement it will be of interest to examine this degree, and to learn, if possible, who were these friends who were so insistent in the matter, always bearing in mind that Erasmus was fond of the rhetorical, especially when it saved him from the necessity of entering into troublesome explanations. We give herewith the degree itself, which, so far as we know, has never before been translated from the original Latin, and which contains in its terms many points that shed light on its origin.

> I, Baldassare Bernezio, by the grace of God and the Apostolic See, Archbishop of Lodi, Suffragan, Locum-tenens, and Vicar-General of the Most Reverend Lord and Father in Christ, Giovanni Ludovico della Rovere, by the same grace Bishop of Turin, acting in this place as Vice-Chancellor of the Studium in our beloved Uni-

[3] *Ibid.*, 203.

[4] Nolhac, *Érasme en Italie*, p. 11.

versity of Turin, especially deputed by the same Most Reverend Lord Bishop of Turin, Chancellor of the aforesaid University: to that venerable man Erasmus of Rotterdam, of the convent of Steyn, of the Order of St. Augustine, in the Diocese of Utrecht in Holland, health in Him who is the true health of all.

We deem it meet and proper that for all deserving work proper rewards should be bestowed, more particularly on those persons who have applied themselves to difficult and painstaking labors in the science of Sacred Theology, by which truth is distinguished from falsehood, and the salvation of souls is secured. Since therefore that venerable man and Master of Sacred Theology, Father Jacopino da Prato of the Order of St. Francis, appointed as your Promoter, has this day presented you Erasmus to us and to our venerable brother Father Bernardino di Pirro, Master of Sacred Theology, of the Order of Preachers, Dean of the aforesaid University, and to the other Doctors of the Corporation, as a sufficient and worthy Bachelor in the aforesaid faculty of Sacred Theology; and we, together with the aforesaid Fathers, the Dean, and the other Doctors of the said Corporation, have solemnly decreed that this presentation made of you should be accepted; and because we find you suitable to the same faculty of Sacred Theology, and proved sufficient by the due and firm responses given by you to the arguments and questions put to you; and since by the aforesaid Dean and the other Fathers, Doctors and Masters in the aforesaid Corporation, deputed in the premises, you have been found by this faculty fit and suitable for obtaining the degree of Licentiate as well as that of Doctor and Master in the aforesaid faculty of Sacred Theology; therefore We, Baldassare, Archbishop and Vice-Chancellor aforesaid, desirous of rendering such an acceptable reward as we might to your virtues and labors, by the Apostolic authority vested in us, have declared you worthy, sufficient, and deserving in the aforesaid faculty of Sacred Theology, and do now publicly pronounce you a Licentiate, giving and conceding to you by the same authority, moreover, the right and privilege in the aforesaid faculty of Sacred Theology of explaining, disputing, annotating, and interpreting; and also of asking, obtaining, and receiving the degree of Doctor and the dignity of Master in the same faculty of Sacred Theology, whensoever you may desire in this University and under the aforesaid Promoter.

Now, because the aforesaid Father Jacopino da Prato, your Promoter, by our command, and by the advice and consent of the aforesaid reverend Dean and the other reverend Fathers and Divines of the said Corporation here present in the episcopal palace of Turin, as a sign of your having achieved the higher degree of the Doctorate and that of Master in said faculty of Sacred Theology, has assigned you according to custom a Master's chair, has tendered you a closed book and also an open book, has placed upon your head the cap, and has given you the kiss of peace and our paternal benediction as a sign of the Degree and Mastership well merited and

received by you this day: in testimony of these facts We have commanded the present document, having the value of a public instrument, to be subscribed and signed by the eminent episcopal secretary of the diocese of Turin, to be authenticated by the appending thereto of the seal of the Most Reverend Chancellor aforesaid, and to be given to you.

Done and given in the hall of the episcopal palace of Turin in which similar acts are wont to be done, this Friday the fourth day of the month of September in the year from the Nativity of Our Lord one thousand five hundred and six, the ninth indiction, in the presence of the venerable Father John Porcelli our chaplain and that worthy man Father Michael Gagliardi, beadle of the aforesaid University, summoned and requested as witnesses in the premises. Pertachia.[5]

The first thing that strikes our notice is that this degree was given Erasmus by the Vicar-General of the diocese of Turin and Vice-Chancellor of the University, acting for the Chancellor who was Bishop of Turin and who was at that time absent in Rome. The next thing to observe is that this absent Bishop of Turin, who was at the same time Chancellor of the University, and whose privilege it was to bestow the honors of the University, was Giovanni Ludovico della Rovere, a grandnephew of the reigning Pontiff, Julius II. Now there is a curious wording of terms here where the Vice-Chancellor states that he has been especially deputed by the Chancellor.[6] The meaning is somewhat obscure, and leaves us in doubt whether he was especially deputed to give Erasmus and his companion a degree, or that he had been deputized to act generally in such matters for the absent Chancellor. Not being able to decide this minor point, we pass on to something more tangible. Erasmus left Paris about the beginning of August, as is settled by his referring to the burning of the Cathedral of Chartres in his dedication of the *Pseudomantis* to René d'Illiers, for that disaster occurred on July 26, 1506, while he was still in Paris. Now he received his degree in the 4th of September, which indicates a very quick journey from Paris to Turin. The distance is about five hundred miles and had to be covered on horseback. Since the party could not always travel by night, especially through the passes of the Alps, it follows that they must have ridden early and late to make this long journey in a scant month. It also follows, from the same reasoning, that they had no time to prepare for examinations previously to appearing before the authorities of the University and presenting their petition for a degree. This seems to point to the fact that their coming was already expected by the University; that examinations, outside of possibly a few perfunctory questions, were dispensed with in their case; and that arrangements for the ceremony had been made in advance. This at first glance would strike one as a very irregular and improbable proceeding, and might cause us to doubt the accuracy of our dates. The dates being duly established,

[5] Vischer, *Erasmiana*, p. 7.

[6] "Ab eodem reuerendissimo domino episcopo Taurinensi prefatæ vniuersitatis canzellario specialiter deputatus," etc.

however, we have to seek an explanation elsewhere. No working hypothesis is tenable until we casually run across the following from Rashdall, and immediately we have what seems a conclusive solution of the problem. He says:

> The Pope claimed a right to dispense with the whole or any part of the preliminaries required for the Doctorate in any University, and to demand the admission of the candidate, either immediately, or after a certain limited period of residence. This right was very frequently exercised in favor of friars at Paris and elsewhere.[7]

This solves the mystery, provided that we can demonstrate any reasonable possibility that Pope Julius II exercised his privilege in favor of Erasmus. For this purpose we shall have to go to England and see what friends Erasmus had made during his sojourn in that country. The first that claims our attention is Andreas Ammonius of Lucca, one of the closest friends that Erasmus ever had. Allen has gathered together all the facts about him that are of interest to us in this connection.

> [He was] an Italian, who had come to England from Rome to seek his fortune, [and] had known the members of the Rovere family . . . when their fortunes were not in the ascendant, and therefore before the election of Julius II to the Papacy. . . . But his departure from Rome is probably to be placed in the autumn of 1504; when his fellow-townsman Sylvester dei Gigli of Lucca, Bishop of Worcester, whom he mentions as his patron . . . , was sent to carry the Papal cap and sword to Henry VII. . . . He was already in England in 1506, since he knew Erasmus before the latter's journey to Italy. . . . In 1509 he was in Lord Mountjoy's service . . . , being in Pace's judgment . . . the most accomplished Latin secretary of his day. . . . By July 1511 he had entered the King's service as Latin Secretary; and on 3 February, 1512 he had received a Canonry in St. Stephen's, Westminster. He was naturalized on 12 April, 1514, and in March 1515 obtained through Henry's influence with the Pope a subcollectorship of Peter's Pence in England. He died of the sweating sickness, aged rather less than forty. . . .[8]

Through Ammonius, not unnaturally, Erasmus met the Bishop of Worcester, Sylvester dei Gigli, an ecclesiastic who by virtue of his position was equally influential in both the Papal and the English courts. He was ambassador at the Papal court for England during the latter part of the reign of Henry VII, and was titular Bishop of the See of Worcester. When not at Rome, he resided in London to be near the court, rather than at Worcester whose episcopal revenues he enjoyed, but whose episcopal duties he delegated to others. Now Ammonius had come to England in the service of Gigli, whom he calls his patron. What more likely than that Erasmus' need of a doctorate was brought to the attention of the great man, and the plan decided on of taking

[7] *Mediæval Universities,* Vol. II, p. 29. [8] Eras. Ep. 218, Intro.

advantage of the Pope's prerogative, which would give him the coveted degree without any possible chance of failure? Then the university which should give it must be decided on. Bologna by all means. Unfortunately, Bologna at that time was in the hands of the Bentivogli, who were the Pope's enemies, and hence the Pope's mandate might receive scant respect. But there was the University of Turin, where the Pope's grandnephew was Chancellor, than which nothing could be more fortunate for their purpose. Possibly this is why Erasmus received his doctorate at the University of Turin, which was comparatively little known, rather than at that of Bologna whose reputation was world-famous. Hence his dissatisfaction with his degree as mentioned above, when he said that he took it against his better judgment, and at the urging of others. However, whether he obtained his degree through the mediation of Ammonius, Boerio, or directly through the personal request of Gigli to the Pope's grandnephew, the fact remains, in our opinion, that it was an honorary degree granted to him directly by the Pope, at the solicitation of some person or persons of sufficient influence to induce the Pontiff to exercise his prerogative in their favor. The question is not really vital; and in advancing this explanation of the matter, which we believe to be the true one, we shall insist on nothing except its plausibility.[9]

But we left Erasmus at Turin, whence he leisurely proceeded to Florence on account of the disturbance at Bologna. Now we are to suppose that every river to be crossed, every historic town to be visited, must have called up the glories of ancient Italy to the classic mind of Erasmus. On the beauties of Nature he seldom dilated, but as he had himself essayed the lofty art of painting, he could not have been oblivious to the grand masterpieces which even in his day were plentiful enough in the churches and cloisters which they had necessarily to pass.

When they reached Bologna they found that city hemmed in by the besieging troops of Pope Julius, and were perforce obliged to pass on to Florence, where they stayed for several weeks. Learning at last that it was safe to return now that the Pope had driven out the Bentivogli, they retraced their steps and established themselves conveniently to the University, which was their ultimate goal. But it was no longer the sedate and dignified university town of their hopes, but, on the contrary, the centre of a very maelstrom of warring and contending factions. It was a time of violence when force alone was respected, and each leader of a party acted in accord with the ancient adage that

> They should take who have the power
> And they should keep who can.

It seems that the Bentivogli, who exercised a sort of sovereignty over the Bolognese, had incurred the enmity of the papal power, thus bringing about a state of affairs which appealed to the cupidity of the neighboring powers, notably those of France and Venice. The reigning Pontiff was

[9] It is gratifying to the writer to have his opinion confirmed by the approval of those two Erasmian scholars, Prof. Allen of Oxford and Prof. Huizinga of Leyden.

Julius II, a shrewd, calculating, and masterful man, and consequently a man who had made numerous and powerful enemies, with the result that his name and fame have for several centuries been blackened by the unthinking and injudicious. But the history of those times is now being rewritten, and many of the actors therein are found to be not so black as painted. As for Pope Julius II, we are only concerned with him here because he has to do with Erasmus, and will be satisfied to take von Ranke's opinion that he was a noble soul, full of lofty plans for the glory and weal of Italy. If that distinctly Protestant historian was satisfied with the aims and ideals of Julius, they must have been at least lofty.

Erasmus imbibed his dislike for Pope Julius from Ammonius and Bombace. The latter was an out and out Bentivoglian, while Ammonius had some private grievance against the Pope's whole family, as we shall hereafter show. So much did he hate Julius that he would not date one of his letters in the Calends of July, but dated it "Sexto Calen. Quintiles, odi enim Iulianum nomen."[10] Julius was undoubtedly clever. That he was an astute statesman who easily outwitted the best diplomatists of Europe is equally true; but that he was the fierce and bloodthirsty personage that some atrabilious writers have made him out to be is not borne out by the facts. Perhaps M. Nisard more than any other modern writer is responsible for this tradition, which still lingers with a few, for his sketches of this Pontiff are drawn with a clever though undiscriminating hand; and while we feel they are overdrawn we cannot withhold our meed of praise for the fine artistry displayed. He represents Julius advancing on Bologna, booted and spurred, offering to the kiss of the stupid multitudes his feet whitened by the dust of the battlefield, brandishing his sword like the keys of St. Peter, and pushing his horse through the breaches of the walls thrown down to do him honor. And then Nisard pictures for us

> Erasmus in the main thoroughfare of Bologna, leaning against a wall, wrapped in his furs, his ironical countenance gazing on the passing procession, and meditating those wise criticisms on the warlike Papacy which his adversaries afterwards treated as heresies worthy of the flames.[11]

All this is fine writing; as a picture it is magnificent, but it is not true, and Nisard might have found out the real facts by a little research. There was an eyewitness of the events of that day who has left us an accurate account of the transactions of the occasion, even to the minutest details. This was Paride Grassi, master of ceremonies of the papal chapel. He seems to have been a garrulous personage, and kept a diary in imitation of Burchard, his predecessor in the office. From him we learn that Julius was neither booted nor spurred, as Nisard alleges, nor did he wear a mitre in the form of a casque, as Feugère states, nor yet a breastplate, as Nolhac tells us. Erasmus says that he acted the part of Julius Caesar. Let us see.

Now Grassi states that Julius entered Bologna secretly and by night, having secured the Mansion, as the military house of the Knights of

[10] Eras. Ep. 429.

[11] *Études sur la Renaissance.*

Jerusalem was called. Then he goes on to tell how Julius entered the city cautiously and privately rather than in the full gaze of everybody.[12]

There were a few astrologers in the papal train, as belief in astrology had not yet entirely died out in the world. These men tried to dissuade the Pontiff from his course on the grounds that the stars were not propitious; but he would not have it so, and exclaimed, "In the name of the Lord let us advance and enter."[13] A great triumph and celebration was prepared, but Grassi quaintly observes, "It was not given because, as I have already said, the Pontiff entered the city before the day designated for the triumph." Grassi, in his capacity of master of ceremonies, would naturally have wished for something of that sort, but states that "the Pope, as is his wont, would not have it so."[14] So then Julius decided to enter the rebellious city as Pope and Father of the Faithful.[15] Then Grassi goes on to describe the Pope's first public appearance on the next evening, when he went in solemn procession to St. Peter's church, preceded by twenty-two Cardinals in their red robes, and borne in his sedan chair beneath a canopy which was held aloft by the ambassadors of the Emperor, the King of France, and the Venetian republic. After pontificating at the high altar, he laid aside the simple mitre and stole which he had hitherto worn, and putting on another stole of precious material, and along with this a purple cope, he went to his palace in the great square, being borne along as before in his sedan chair. We need not follow the ceremonies of the occasion any further, as it is already evident that Nisard was drawing too much on his imagination when he placed Erasmus against a pillar in order to see Julius approach, *booted and spurred;* and although Erasmus casually states in his letter to Jerome Busleiden that "Pope Julius fights, conquers, triumphs, and perspicuously plays the part of Julius [Caesar]," [16] yet his biographers claim that he fought more with his brain than with his sword, pointing to the fact that the taking of Bologna did not cost him the life of one man. He probably realized the truth of the Napoleonic axiom, that a show of force is the best argument for promoting peace.

Now he who would understand the reasons which actuated Julius in moving on Bologna and annexing it to the Papal States must go back two or three centuries to the origin of the troubles between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. Speaking broadly, there were two parties in Italy, the Ghibelline which embraced all the supporters of the Imperial authority in Italy, and the Guelf which included the Popes and the minor principalities and free cities, such as Florence, Bologna, and Milan. Naturally the great Italian ducal houses took opposite sides, and changed them very frequently, as self-interest prompted. The Bentivogli in Bologna had persuaded the people of that city to measures which were hostile to

[12] "Caute potius, ac clanculum quam apparenter, Bononiam adiit et ingressus est." (See *Le due spedizioni di Giulio II tratte dal diario di Paride Grassi, bolognese, maestre delle ceremonie della capella papale,* p. 85.)

[13] *Idem.*

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 88.

[15] "Quod ex quo Pontifex pontificaliter ciuitatem ingredi statuerat," etc. (*Ibid.,* p. 86.)

[16] Eras. Ep. 205.

the interests of the Papal dominion, for which reason they and their associates had been placed under interdict by Alexander VI. On succeeding to the papal tiara, Julius had adopted the policy of his predecessors, and had so maneuvred affairs that he had caused the city of Bologna to be threatened and hemmed in by a French army. The Bentivogli had to flee, and Julius was on hand to march into the city at the moment of which we are treating. Though the episode is most interesting, we do not intend to enlarge on it in this place, since it would involve a discussion of the origin and purpose, the merits and demerits, and the right or wrong of the whole question of the Temporal Power. Suffice it to say in passing that the rule of the Popes over the Papal States was at least a domestic rule of the Italians over Italians, whereas the rule of the German emperors was certainly a rule of foreigners; and historians trace the present unification of Italy to the efforts of the Popes in keeping the Emperors out of the Italian peninsula.

Now Erasmus was opposed to war of any kind and lost no occasion to denounce it. In an age when war was not the last, but the very first, resort of kings, it required considerable courage for a single individual to inveigh against it; and it is very much to the credit of Erasmus that he always and consistently maintained this position, basing his reasons therefor on the love of God and our fellow-man, as was right and proper. His letters and works are full of his forceful denunciations of this terrible evil; and towards the close of his life he gathered up all the passages from his writings which bore on this topic, and published them under the title of *Antipolemus.*

But we must not leave him standing against the pillar in Bologna where Nisard had left him. He had now a settled income, few duties to perform, and plenty of leisure for writing; and as a consequence we observe renewed literary activity, with preparation and planning for future works. He still continued his translations from Lucian and published them whenever occasion offered. This author seemed to exercise over him a fascination which has not received the consideration due it. Lucian was the greatest satirist the world has ever known. He lived in the old pagan days, and the worship of the innumerable gods and goddesses furnished him a most inviting theme on which to exercise his satiric gift. He pilloried unmercifully the popular religious cults, and flayed the priests and pseudo-philosophers of the day. He held up to public scorn all sorts of sham and imposture, and in his excessive use of ridicule he often erred against justice. No one was spared by this scoffer; even the early Christians, his contemporaries, suffered from his keen lash. It is often so with men who use ridicule and satire. The necessity of making their point so blinds them to all distinctions that truth itself suffers at times. Satire especially has always been a dangerous weapon, making for its user more enemies than friends. It has no reverence for age or convention; it must strike at falsehood, or what it conceives to be such; and if it contains a germ of truth, as most falsehoods do, so much the worse for the truth: it should not have been caught in bad company. The satirist is arrogant and egoistic by nature, which moves him to mount a pedestal, the better to be seen by the multi-

tude. "I am a hater of boasters, of imposters, of liars, and of the vainglorious," [17] says Lucian in one of his *Dialogues*. So are we all, for that matter, but we do not feel called upon to ridicule and lampoon our erring brother. He who would wield this weapon must be spotless in his own conduct, or, as Cowper very aptly puts it:

> Unless a love of virtue light the flame,
> Satire is, more than those he brands, to blame;
> He hides behind a magisterial air
> His own offenses, and leaves others' bare.[18]

That during his translations from Lucian covering the last three years he had become permeated with his influence and thoroughly saturated with his spirit, is evident to all who study intently the writings of Erasmus from this time on. His whole life hitherto had been a rebellion against his destiny. He was discontented with his condition and dissatisfied with the power of others to whom he owed obedience. Lucian showed him what satire could do. Here was a weapon which would stand him in good stead in the parlous times which were approaching, and he felt subconsciously that an opportunity to use this terrible instrument would not be long in coming. But there was this difference between Lucian and Erasmus as satirist: Lucian laughed while he lashed; but Erasmus hated while he stung.

So Erasmus bided his time and allowed nothing to escape his notice which might furnish material for future satire. And truly never was the world's stage more crowded than at that moment with personages whose deeds and characters exposed them to the sting of the satirist. No matter what the reason, it is still true that the Sovereign Pontiff was depending to some extent on his sword for the preservation of the rights handed down to him by his predecessors in the chair of St. Peter. Comparisons between our Savior and his present representative on earth were obvious and inevitable. The wealth and magnificence of the papal court contrasted glaringly with the simplicity of the early Pontiffs, and the lordly retinues of bishops and abbots seemed to ill accord with the poverty and meekness of the Founder of Christianity. And yet, how can we rightly judge in the circumstances? It was an age of force, when meekness and humility were poorly understood by the kings and barons of half-civilized Europe; and the Popes of those days were still men, influenced by their training and environment, and realizing that meekness and lowliness before such truculent kings and robber barons was but a confession of weakness, sure to be misunderstood and taken advantage of when occasion served. Pius VII had to yield ignobly to the might of Napoleon because he had, in the physical sense, no weapons to oppose him. Perhaps it was just as well, but that question is an open one. Julius II had to meet dangers fully as great, since emperors openly schemed to have themselves elected Pope, and dukes did not hesitate to murder Cardinals outside the Pontiff's own door. But

[17] μισαλαζών εἰμι καὶ μισογόης καὶ μισοψευδὴς καὶ μισότυφος καὶ μισῶ πᾶν τὸ τοιουτῶδες εἶδος τῶν μιαρῶν ἀνθρώπων . . . (Lehmann, *Luciani Opera*, Vol. III, p. 150, see the dialogue entitled ἀλιεύς.)

[18] *Charity*, l. 670.

Erasmus could only see the inconsistencies in the conduct of Christ's vicar, and was evidently oblivious to the perils to which the Pontiff was exposed.[19]

It is, moreover, to be borne in mind that Erasmus was living in a city which had just been forced to accept the suzerainty of Pope Julius, and which had acknowledged the fact with very bad grace. Among the many friends whom he met at Bologna, and to whom it is natural to suppose that he was furnished with letters of introduction by his Italian friends in London, was Paolo Bombace, an accomplished scholar in Greek and Latin, who was also Professor of Rhetoric and the Greek tongue in the University of Bologna. He was a vigorous partisan in the troubles which occurred between Pope Julius and the Bentivogli, assisting the latter with all the ardor of youth and making no secret of his anti-papal leanings. Fantuzzi tells us that he even took up the pick and shovel and aided in making fortified positions and trenches to serve for the defense of his native city.[20] Mutual tastes, a love of learning, and particularly Greek learning, were the bonds that bound these two men in a friendship which ceased only with the death of Bombace at the sack of Rome by the French troops in 1527. It is most reasonable, therefore, to conclude that such friends as Bombace and others of the circle in which he moved must have tinctured Erasmus' sentiments with their own and, unversed as he was in the devious ways of Italian politics, have made him an ardent partisan of the claims of the Bolognese as against those of the Pope. So he mentally registered Julius II as a future subject for satire, but for the present kept a close guard over his tongue, pondering deeply the while.

One might imagine that his surroundings were at this time fairly satisfactory to him, but this is evidently not so. Although he was living at his ease in a university town, and at the expense of others, with few duties to perform and plenty of time to devote to his beloved studies, still he was discontented. He states that he never spent a more unpleasant year than this one at Bologna, and he gives the conduct of Clyfton as the reason. We have not been given Clyfton's side of the story, so, remembering Erasmus' tendency to exaggeration, we must accept his account only so far as it is borne out by the testimony of others. There is a close analogy between this episode and the episode of the tutor of Thomas Grey mentioned in a former chapter. They are both characterized by an apparently studied indefiniteness as to the producing cause, and the same fierce hatred of the offending party, for whom no expression of scorn and contempt is sufficiently satisfying. While he exclaimed upon Grey's tutor as a rascal and viper, he now reviles

[19] Muzzi says that when Pope Julius was a Cardinal, and Bishop of Bologna, he incurred the enmity of Pope Alexander VI, but had set him at defiance. Bentivoglio, to ingratiate himself with Alexander, tried to make Julius a prisoner. This was one of his reasons for punishing the Bentivogli, of which Erasmus was naturally unaware.

[20] "Gli cittadini ancora piu qualificati si adoperarono di persona nelle opere di difesa, onde anche Paolo prese la vanga ed il badile per cavar terra e alzar trinciere e far tutt' altro che abbisognava in quelle circostanze," etc. (*Scrittori Bolognese*, Tome II, p. 277.)

Clyfton as a monster and a pig. No doubt Boerio in London received both sides of the story from the interested parties, embellished to the utmost of which they were capable. It is possible that Clyfton's ground of complaint against Erasmus was based on the neglect of his duties towards the two sons of Boerio. As if to counteract this, Erasmus insisted that his duties were not those of a teacher or preceptor, but only of a supervisor of what related to their studies. He told Botzheim (and rather ungratefully, we cannot help thinking, under the circumstances) that he had been inveigled into consenting to accompany the two boys into Italy, but we know that this is not so, for in his letter to Linacre he looked forward with pleasure to the affair, and commented on the natural gifts, the modesty, and the tractability of the two young men.[21] His contract was for one year, and he seems to have fulfilled it with regard to time, if not with respect to value given. But Boerio was not a man to be treated lightly or unjustly. His position at the English Court as royal physician brought him into frequent contact with the mutual friends of both, and Erasmus would naturally prefer his friendship to his enmity. It would appear, however, that Clyfton had the better success with the father, and succeeded in causing more than a coolness between Erasmus and Boerio, an estrangement which was not at all to the former's liking. If Boerio had not been the direct means of his easily obtaining his doctorate, as we have previously intimated, he certainly had done him some other great favor, for Erasmus sought to honor him as he was wont to honor others who had helped him with money, or favors which were equivalent, by dedicating to him one of his works. This was a translation of the *Astrologia* of Lucian, and we can estimate the value which he set on such an offering, and the high position which the recipients of such honors held in his regard, by naming the other men who had received them at his hands, viz., Archbishop Warham, Bishop Foxe, Richard Whitford, Christopher Fisher, Thomas Ruthall, Christopher Urswick, René d'Illiers, John Paludanus, and others whom the reader will recall. And so he very gracefully presents it in the following words:

> First the intention of the giver must commend it . . . to you. and then it will be due to your candor and usual practice to raise it from a trifle to an ample gift, from a mediocre to an eminent and uncommon one, and such will certainly be the case if my little book shall go before the public not only with Boerio's praise, but also with his judicious criticism.[22]

This did not entirely melt the royal physician's coldness, but there followed an interchange of letters, and in 1513, when the young Boerios had returned from Italy to England, the father offered Erasmus the hospitality of his house and table, and thereupon Erasmus remarks that the father had changed his opinion of him completely since the young men had returned. There can be no doubt that Erasmus was anxious to stand well with Boerio, for he often expressed his regret in after

[21] Eras. Ep. 194. [22] *Ibid.* 267.

days that this unpleasantness had arisen between them, and, writing to one of the sons twenty-five years afterwards, he says:

> We owe it to that fellow whom you style the Beetle, not alone that I had to leave you sooner than I expected, but also that the joy of our friendship was mingled with much bitterness, and, in fact, had not my obligation held me to my duty, may I die if I could have been compelled to endure the monster one month for any amount of money.[23]

[23] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1182

CHAPTER XVIII

ITALY: NEW FRIENDS; FRESH LITERARY EFFORTS; ALDUS

It was during the period of his stay in Bologna that the curious adventure happened to him of which he spoke in his letter to Lambert Grunnius.[1] The Augustinian habit which he wore was subject to slight changes in different countries, especially as to color. At Steyn he wore the simple brown habit, but when he went to Paris he found that, in addition to this, the monks of his Order wore a white scapulary (linen) over their habit. Erasmus conformed to the French custom on this point. When he went to Bologna, the brethren of his Order in that city wore the plain habit without the white scapulary. The plague was prevalent in Bologna at that time, he tells us, and it appeared that the attendants who buried the dead of that disease used to wear a white cloth over the left shoulder as a distinguishing mark, so that passers-by could avoid them. Erasmus claims that he was mistaken for one of these morgue attendants, and was mobbed by the people, narrowly escaping with his life. The story somewhat strains our powers of belief and, as we have before stated, is frankly disbelieved by some of his biographers, particularly by Drummond and Emerton. That a people like the Bolognese who were accustomed to the daily sight of the various religious habits on their streets could mistake this one for anything else is strange, but possible, in view of the white scarf. Nay, more, in the dusk of the evening it might be even probable that Erasmus was held up and asked to give an account of himself. Being unable to do this in Italian, which he could not speak, and thus becoming an object of the suspicion with which all foreigners were regarded in every country during the Middle Ages, he may justly claim that something similar to what he describes really happened to him in Bologna. Now, when we remember how distasteful to him was everything monastic, we can easily appreciate what little love he bore the habit which he was obliged to wear. Add to this the thought that was beginning to take shape in his mind, of one day being able to throw it off forever, and we can easily see how an incident such as that mentioned above might be of service to him in accomplishing that object. So we are inclined to accept the incident, allowing for the usual Erasmian embellishments. And we are the more inclined to believe it because he immediately set about obtaining permission from Rome to dispense with the wearing of his habit, in which he was successful in the event. He would have us think that Pope Julius granted him this privilege as a personal favor, but we know all such matters were handled by special congregations or

[1] See pages 21 and 29.

commissions, and that as a matter of fact the Pontiff was frequently not even consulted. The business of the Pontifical court, then as now, followed the customs prevalent in all courts, and the actual Church government was entrusted to ecclesiastics of various ranks and positions. So it was probably through his acquaintance with the Church dignitaries who had influence in Rome that he eventually obtained the coveted favor of no longer being obliged to wear the detested habit, provided that he wore a dress that was in some measure suitable to an ecclesiastic. But, from this very claim that Pope Julius did him the favor, we realize that he had not consulted the wishes of his superiors at Steyn nor the Provincial of his district. Evidently he had worked along the lines of least resistance, and the officials of his Order had to make the best of it. The abandoning of his habit was one of the changes which Prior Servatius charged him with, as we shall see when we come to that period.

Another friend whom he made at this time, while the Pope and his entourage were still in Bologna, was Scipione Fortiguerra, or as he styled himself in Greek in accordance with the custom then prevalent, Carteromachos. Here was another piece of good fortune. Erasmus had never met Poliziano, for whom he always expressed the greatest admiration, and now he might never more hope for that happiness since Poliziano had gone to his early grave thirteen years before. But in Carteromachos he met a man who had been a pupil of the great man, and who could discourse with him about the object of his admiration. Carteromachos was about his own age, and consequently in the prime of life. Like Bombace he was a Greek scholar, which inevitably attracted Erasmus to him, and in the event, Carteromachos was able to be of great service to him for many years to come. He had been associated with Aldus Manutius, the famous printer at Venice, and with him had been instrumental in founding the celebrated Neacademia, which embraced in its membership most of the leading Greek scholars of Italy. He had been appointed tutor to Galeotto della Rovere, a nephew of Pope Julius, and was consequently in attendance on his pupil during the Bolognese campaign. When the Papal Curia returned to Rome in the February of 1507, Carteromachos followed it thither. Here certainly was a friend for Erasmus at Rome, and close enough to the Pope if favors were needed. As we shall meet him again during our perusal of Erasmus' letters, we need not here follow him further, but merely indicate that it was by hearing so much from him about Aldus Manutius and his famous press that Erasmus was led to seek the acquaintance of the world's greatest printer. To have a work of his issuing from such a press would in a measure place on his writings the approval of Italian scholarship, and Erasmus was not regardless of the value of such recognition. Accordingly, he wrote to Aldus at Venice the following letter, and not without imparting to it a little of the subtle flattery of which he was a past master:

> Most learned Manutius: I have often had the wish in mind that you might reap as much profit for yourself as you shed light on

both Greek and Latin literature, not only by your skill and your exceedingly beautiful typography, but also by your genius and uncommon learning. For as to the matter of fame, there is no doubt that the name of Aldus Manutius will flit from tongue to tongue down through the ages among those who have been initiated into the sacred domain of literature. Moreover, your reputation, which is now illustrious, will not only be celebrated, but also cherished and honored, because, as I am informed, you labor to restore and diffuse good authors with exceeding care, but not with equal profit to yourself; and evidently, after the example of Hercules, you devote yourself to labors truly the most beautiful, sometime to bring you immortal glory, but which will meanwhile enrich others more than they do you. I understand that Plato is about to be issued in the original Greek by you, a work which already the learned are eagerly awaiting. I very much wish to know what medical writers you are publishing. And oh, would that you could give us Paulus Aegineta. I wonder greatly why you have not long since published the *New Testament,* a work, unless I fail in my guess, which will please even the multitude, but especially my kind, that is, the theologians. I send you two tragedies translated by myself with great boldness in truth, but whether happily, you shall be the judge. Thomas Linacre, William Grocyn, William Latimer, and Cuthbert Tunstall, your friends as well as mine, have greatly praised them, men who you yourself know are too learned to be mistaken, and too sincere to flatter, unless perchance they are blinded by their affection for me; nor do the Italians here to whom I have shown them censure my effort. Badius printed them, quite profitably for himself, so he writes; for, as I conceive, he has already sold the entire issue. But he has not been sufficiently careful of my reputation, so numerous are the errors therein; and so he offers his assistance for the purpose of improving the old edition by a new one. But I fear lest, as the proverb of Sophocles puts it, he may correct one fault only by committing another. I would deem my lucubrations assured of immortality, were they to issue from your press, especially in your small type, which is the most beautiful of all. Arrange it so that the volume may be very small, and that the matter may be executed at trifling expense. So, if it shall seem convenient to you to undertake the affair, I will supply gratis the corrected copy which I send by this young man, expecting nothing other than that you send me a few copies to be given to my friends.

Nor should I fear to attempt the matter at my own expense and risk, were it not that I must leave Italy within a few months. So I very much desire that the business should be attended to as soon as possible; and it will require only about ten days to do it. In any case, if you insist that I take one hundred or two hundred copies, though Mercury the god of commerce is not wont to be very propitious to me, and it would be very inconvenient to transport the bundle, yet I will not esteem this too much trouble, provided that

you make reasonable terms for me. Farewell, most learned Aldus, and put Erasmus amongst the number of those who cordially wish you well.

If there be in your establishment any of the rarer authors, you will do me a favor by letting me know of them, for those learned Britons have laid upon me the injunction to inquire this out for them. If you are not entirely easy in your mind about publishing my tragedies, give the copy back to the person who brought it, to be returned to me. Bologna, October 28, 1507.[2]

In addition to his profound knowledge of the authors of classic antiquity, Aldus had a well-ordered mind which enabled him to combine his learning with considerable business acumen, as a result of which he became in the event a very wealthy man. He had undoubtedly heard of the growing fame of Erasmus, and was not slow to close with him on the matter of publishing his translations from Euripides; but these comparative trifles did not satisfy him, for we soon see that he entered into negotiations with Erasmus for the republication of his most famous work, the *Adages*. For the present he invited him to Venice, an invitation that Erasmus could not for the moment accept, but of which he later availed himself. He again urged on Aldus the need of hurry in issuing the *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia in Aulis,* as he very much wished to present his friends in Bologna and Rome with copies of the work as New Year's gifts. Evidently Aldus met the occasion, for the work was published some time in December, 1507.

Since we shall have occasion to meet Aldus again when Erasmus betook himself to Venice, we need not occupy ourselves longer with him at this time. There is a touch of Erasmian duplicity in the second letter to Aldus, where Erasmus instructs him to omit an epigram which appears in the edition issued by Badius at Paris in the previous year. This epigram had been written for him by one of his amanuenses named Gervais Amoenus of Dreux, and had been printed at the end of the *Iphigenia*. In directing Aldus to omit it in the forthcoming edition, he said that it was

the work of a French youth who was at that time an employee of mine, whom I had persuaded for a joke to print these verses of his, and on my departure I had handed them over to Badius in the young man's presence so that he might expect to see them in print. But I am greatly wondering what put it in the mind of Badius to print them, when I had warned him that I only desired to have a little sport with the young man.[3]

Evidently Badius had quite a different idea of a joke from that of Erasmus, and inserted them. It is, as a matter of fact, rather a creditable epigram, and was the first fruits of a talented youth who lived to make his mark in the literary world by bringing out an edition of the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus, which was published by the same Badius in 1512; and who also left behind him other works of similar

[2] Eras. Ep. 207.

[3] *Ibid.*, 209.

value. These unamiable traits of Erasmus occurred quite frequently, as we shall see, and show us that the great are sometimes affected with surprising littlenesses. We mention the incident here for the purpose of keeping our picture in due perspective. Another example may be taken from his treatment of Giambattista Pio, who was the successor of Philip Beroaldus in the chair of Latin at Bologna. Both these men were prone to indulge in archaic expressions drawn from the earlier Latin authors, and possibly used such to excess. For Beroaldus, who had recently died, Erasmus professed the highest regard; but for his successor Pio he had nothing but contempt. Whether this sprang from personal feeling is unknown; but that is very possible, since Erasmus was very touchy, and Pio may not have extended to him all the courtesies that the occasion in Erasmus' estimation seemed to require. Nolhac tells the story that Erasmus went one day to hear Pio lecture. As he was leaving after the lecture, one of his friends asked him what he thought of the lecturer, of whom everyone was making much ado. At first he replied that his opinion was not important. When his friend insisted, however, he replied that he at first thought him silly, but now he considered him entirely crazy.[4] This was a judgment dictated by some sort of prejudice, for Pio had already won a wide reputation. He had taught in Milan and afterwards at Rome, then again at Bologna and later on at Lucca. In 1534 he was appointed to the Chair of Eloquence in Paul III's College of Wisdom. He was a voluminous writer along the same lines as Erasmus, and so was in some sort a competitor, having brought out editions of Fulgentius, Plautus, Valerius Flaccus, and notes on Horace, Columella, and Cicero, with other works of similar importance.[5]

We have no more letters between Erasmus and Aldus or any other of his correspondents during the rest of his stay in Bologna, and can only conjecture from the printed results what were his activities of that time. In some sort of way more or less satisfactory he fulfilled his obligations towards Boerio's boys until the term of his contract had expired, and in his spare time he revised his *Adages* and also the *Antibarbari,* which, we may remember, he had written for Batt's delectation as well as his own.[6] Another thing which he wrote at this time was what he styled *A Short Declamation,* in which he marshals in persuasive array all the arguments for a monastic life, and likewise those that can be advanced against it. Although this has not come down to us, we may guess his arguments, as we have already seen him display them for us in his early treatise *De contemptu mundi.* It would be of supreme interest for students of Erasmus if the circumstances which elicited this work of his were known to us. Possibly the anomalous position which he, a monk, was forced to assume in attacking his own Order, in maintaining the thesis that, though he himself was the product of monasticism, yet monasticism was corrupt and a stench in the nostrils of the godly, in striving to prove to his own

[4] *Erasme en Italie,* p. 22, note 1.

[5] His edition of Lucretius published in Bologna in 1511 is highly praised by Dibdin in his *Latin Classics.* (Vol. II, p. 2.)

[6] Only part of this work has come down to us, for it was lost while in charge of Richard Pace, to whom Erasmus had entrusted it at Ferrara.

very good friends who, like himself, were monks, that they were good, virtuous, industrious, and imbued with the love of learning, not because of, but in spite of, the fact that they were monks—these and other knotty questions may have impelled him to present both sides of the shield in his own justification. It is very possible too that it was a particular method chosen by him for the spread of his own ideas, whereby, under an appearance of absolute impartiality, he could yet give both sides of a question in such a way that close examination of both matter and manner would be calculated to sway the reader to Erasmus' point of view. This is the plan that he evidently followed in the *De contemptu mundi,* in the *Panegyric* to Prince Philip, in the *Declamatiuncula* above mentioned under the title of *A Short Declamation,* and later on in a paper which he wrote for Pope Julius, at the instigation of his cousin the Cardinal of St. George, as to whether it were right or wrong to make war on the Venetians. As usual he presented his arguments pro and con with masterly grace, making, however, those for peace preponderate to the extent that the Pope sent for him. De Burigni gives the following account:

> It was not without fear that he went to his audience with this imperious and violent Pontiff; but he got out of it with a reprimand administered with gentleness, and with the advice to not meddle with the affairs of princes.

This story may or may not be true, as de Burigni gives no authority for it, and Erasmus, when speaking of the paper to Botzheim, fails to mention the circumstance; yet, if it is really authentic, it gives us a picture of historic value in estimating the character of these two great men.[7]

Though he was merciless in subjecting others to the lash of ridicule, he was himself peculiarly sensitive to its action and would under no circumstances place himself in a position where he might experience its effects at the hand of anyone else. So, when he was asked to lecture publicly at Bologna, he declined on the ground that the Italians might make fun of his German pronunciation of Latin, to which they were not accustomed.[8]

Loath as he was to leave the cultured society of Bologna and the helpful friendship of Bombace and the rest of his Bolognese friends, he had not forgotten the pressing invitation of Aldus to visit him at Venice; so, having in mind the printing of the *Adages,* on the amplifying of which he had been working assiduously during the greater part of the last year, he wrote to Aldus about the book, and as a result Aldus again sent him a pressing invitation to proceed to Venice, where the book could be gotten out under their joint supervision. So, as he had already done in the past and was to do many times in the succeeding years, he cut loose from all the ties that bound him and sallied forth to fresh scenes and new associations beneath the friendly Venetian roof of Aldus Manutius.

Beatus Rhenanus gives us the particulars of the meeting between Erasmus and Aldus:[9]

[7] *Vie d'Érasme,* Vol. I, p. 145. [8] *Ibid.,* Vol. I, p. 123. [9] Eras. Ep. IV, l. 149.

Upon his arrival in Venice, he visited the printing office, where he was compelled to wait for an audience, because Aldus was engaged in hastily correcting the proofs of the typesetters,[10] and had set him down in his own mind as one of the usual callers who, from a sheer love of curiosity rather than from any desire to advise or assist, always made themselves a nuisance to a man whose mind was intent on other things, by visiting him constantly in season and out of season. But when he learned that it was Erasmus he embraced him cordially, begging his pardon the while, and brought him to dwell with himself in the home of Andreas d'Asola, his famous press superintendent and father-in-law, where he met as a fellow-lodger Jerome Aleander of Motta, an accomplished scholar in the three languages, and later a Cardinal.

Aleander, who was destined to play a major part in the drama of the Reformation which was rapidly approaching, and who was really the only protagonist worthy of the title who met Luther openly, fairly, and fearlessly, was born in the little town of Motta in Italy, about thirty-five miles north of Venice. When Erasmus first met him he was only twenty-eight years old, but already had won his spurs. His father was a celebrated physician, and taught his son the secrets of the art in return for a sufficient knowledge of Greek to be able to translate for his own satisfaction the works of Hippocrates and Galen. He had been engaged in teaching belles-lettres publicly since his sixteenth year, and so great a reputation had he made for himself that the Archbishop of Nicosia made it to his interest to come to Venice, where he appointed him to be his own personal tutor. Then it seems that Pope Alexander VI heard of him, and selected him to be secretary to his son, the famous Caesar Borgia; and such weight did the Pontiff attach to Aleander's personal address and mental acumen that he desired him to go on an embassy to Hungary. But this Pope dying shortly afterwards, Aleander saw himself deprived of his most powerful patron at the critical moment of his life, and we next hear of him as living in the house of Aldus Manutius, where he and Erasmus, two men whose paths in life were destined to cross each other frequently in the future, first met. He was engaged at that time in assisting Aldus in editing and issuing to the learned world the classic texts of the ancients, a task for which his broad scholarship eminently fitted him. Whatever later animosities occurred between them —and they were many—Erasmus always bore testimony to his mental ability and accomplishments. For instance, in giving an account of his works to John Botzheim, he says that he undertook the *Opus concionandi* at the request of many, among others, "of that most illustrious man Jerome Aleander, without any doubt the greatest scholar of this age in trilingual [Latin, Greek, and Hebrew] learning."[11] In a letter to Aleander about the same period, he says:

[10] The work that Erasmus found going through the press of Aldus on his arrival in Venice was *Aldi Manutii Romani institutionum grammaticarum libri quatuor. Venetiis apud Aldum, Aprili mense MDVIII.*

[11] Eras. Ep. I, p. 35, l. 12.

> That someone holds you in higher estimation in everything, even in theology, than he holds me, I consider no disgrace, no more in fact than if he should call you richer or handsomer. For it is abundant glory for me even to be compared with you.[12]

And writing to Budé in 1521, he says:

> Aleander has been with me for some time past, but so far his conversation is distressing to me, because he is so full of this matter of Luther's, in which he has certainly showed himself to be brave and energetic. When he has settled that business, for it is now almost settled, I shall be at liberty to enjoy his company, which is as delightful as it is erudite.[13]

John Lascaris, the celebrated Greek scholar, was now ambassador of Louis XII of France to the republic of Venice. Erasmus relates that he was often invited to dine with him, and it is natural to assume that Aleander also enjoyed the same privilege. In any case, Lascaris' royal master sent for Aleander himself in this same year to be Professor of Philology at the University of Paris, and it is proper to suppose that it was Lascaris who sang Aleander's praises to the French monarch. The friendship existing between Aleander and Erasmus was one of the closest intimacy, as they shared the same bed and ate at the same table. Both were endowed with the same love of learning, the same zeal for study, and a similar tenacious memory. Possibly Aleander was even a better scholar than Erasmus, since Aldus had already dedicated to him his edition of the *Iliad* four years before this time, and in the preface to this work he states that Aleander was not only very learned in the Greek and Latin languages, but that he had also applied himself to the Chaldaic and Arabic. He also adds that Aleander was a good Latin poet and prose writer, and was equally accomplished in Greek verse, besides which he was skilled in music and mathematics. As a fitting close to his connection with the University of Paris, he was appointed Rector in 1513. The Bishop of Paris by glittering offers attached him to his service, but in the following year a canonry and a provostship offered to him by the Bishop of Liège induced him to transfer himself to the latter. But, although he had become a naturalized citizen of France in accordance with the wishes of Louis XII, in 1516 he turned his eyes towards Rome, as all the learned men of that era were wont to do, and in 1519 secured the place of Papal Librarian from Leo X. From this time on honor after honor was heaped upon him. He was the representative of the Pope to settle the Lutheran troubles in Germany, both in 1520 and 1538, and was made Archbishop of Brindisi in 1524, and Cardinal in 1536. Circumstances were to arise which would estrange these two bedfellows and fellow-workers, but these unhappy occasions were still far in the future and will be taken up when we reach that time. Suffice it to say for the present that they enjoyed mutually the acquaintanceship of Aldus Manutius, John Lascaris, Marcus Musurus, on his frequent trips from Padua to visit Aldus, and Germain de Brie,

[12] *Ibid.*, 1482, l. 56.

[13] *Ibid.*, 1233, l. 171.

who was at that time studying Greek under Lascaris. What Attic nights were those in Venice in such a goodly company of scholars and savants! It is small wonder that both Aleander and Erasmus used in after years to refer with a sigh to those happy times before Luther had come upon the stage. We have none of their earliest correspondence, but perhaps a letter from Aleander when he was a lecturer in the University of Paris, to Erasmus who was in England, may show the easy and intimate terms of friendship which existed between them for many years. In it Aleander bares all his secret thoughts and aspirations to his old friend, for whom it is evident he had an intense and undisguised admiration; and its unaffected tone and its open sincerity leave us prepossessed in his favor:

I do not very well know whether I should rather blame you or myself, or both of us, for negligence, since, although there was as great a friendship between us as ever existed between any professors of the same art, yet neither of us wrote a single word to the other after you had left Italy. But if we are both to blame in the matter, your fault is much less excusable than mine; for although I sent to you three letters while you were still in Italy, I received nothing from you either before or since that time, beyond three little notes. Now, if perchance my letters did not reach you, and this could easily have occurred on account of the wars that interrupted all things, as well as because you have never, as I am informed, stayed very long in one place, yet you might and ought to write me a little oftener, since you certainly know where I am, and three hundred people come into France from Italy daily.

Moreover, how will you explain the fact that when you were in Paris, and had plenty of messengers, you did not write to me when you wrote to Pyrrhus [d'Angleberme]? Now, when I learned that you were in France, laying aside all my duties, even the most important, and leaving Orléans, I hastened to Paris as quickly as possible, for no other reason indeed but to see you, to embrace you, to join with you in pleasant laughter, to enjoy your learned as well as delightful companionship, and to renew our old comradeship than which nothing ever seemed to me more jolly or pleasant. But the fates were not that kind to us, for four days before I reached there, I learned from friends that you had already departed.

But all will be forgiven you if you will continue to hold me in the same regard that you used to hold me in those days. For of my sincere affection for you, Richard Croke, our common pupil, will testify to you personally, for he is betaking himself thither, more from a fear of warlike disturbances than from any real danger of them, since here there is no talk contrary to peaceful relations between the kings of France and England, except a certain idle gossip of the people, which they say originated in your direction. But continue, dear Erasmus, to be of service to our friend Croke, I beg you, not only in a literary way, but also in patronage, through which he may easily win preferment with those royal personages.

> He is a youth of upright behavior and sound character, very devoted to me, and one who has made such progress in Greek literature that he is not unworthy of both his preceptors.[14] But this is enough about a man whom you will see in person.

Then he goes on to give Erasmus the latest news about the University, and refers to his election to represent the University of Paris at the second Synod of Pisa, and to the fact that he was to have given an oration there, but had declined the honor. He had also been appointed, along with other theologians and jurisconsults, to examine a work dealing with the authority of the Pope and the Church; and gives an interesting account of the diverse differences of opinion that are expressed on the matter. He proceeds to mention that he is reaping much honor but little profit, and whimsically quotes Aristotle to the effect that riches come before philosophy. Then he continues as follows:

> I am not sorry, nor shall I ever be, that at your persuasion I came to France, although, as you know, all Italy was calling me back. For, at the inspiration of some divinity, you took me away from impending wars to a peaceful life, as Mercury took Horace from the battlefield; although in those early months before I had become accustomed to French weather or French customs or the French language, I used to lie in bed sick, and, running over in my mind the friendships left behind in my native land, I used to damn your advice and my own miserable lot.

Then he tells him how hard it is to get money together, and rejoices that one month he was able to scrape together seventy francs:

> . . . although what was earned by long and arduous labor was all used up in a short time, being spent in books, clothing, and food. Now, if there were a small but assured salary settled on me by the King (but this is not to be thought of in these hard times) I would not hesitate to do my work better, and to produce something that might descend to posterity with glory to myself. In this matter I deem you fortunate, Erasmus, in that you have already achieved what I so ardently desire; for I am tired of the turmoil of daily lecturing, which leaves me not only hoarse, but also thoroughly exhausted; nor can I gain sufficient for my present needs, nor even provide a home for my old age.

Then he speaks of the daily routine of a lecturer in the University of Paris, and tells Erasmus that, though his own lectures are among the most popular and crowded, yet when he asks for his honorarium, the students scatter "like the Chaonion doves before the approaching eagle."

> But already I have exceeded the limits of my letter. However, I have written thus much, both because I wanted to pay you with interest for my long silence, and also because, while I am writing, I seem to myself to be speaking with you face to face. Write to me

[14] Richard Croke, a young graduate of Cambridge, who studied Greek under both Erasmus and Aleander at Paris during 1511.

in turn of your affairs, but at length, and in all seriousness, and of something worth while, which you may easily do since I hear no disturbing news from England.

Farewell and commend me heartily to Grocyn, Linacre, More, Latimer, and my other learned friends. I especially vouch to you for the friendship of Dr. Joachim [Engellius] whom I have found to be a man of upright life, and particularly well accomplished in the highest learning. Again farewell. Paris. February, 1512.[15]

But we must return to the famous printing office of Aldus Manutius, and trace as well as we can the activities of Erasmus there. Undoubtedly that work of his which had so far brought him the largest amount of fame, and had enhanced his reputation to the greatest extent with the learned world, was his *Adages*. Not unnaturally, then, was Aldus very willing to associate his name and press with this celebrated work; and hence we see them collaborating in the affair of bringing out a larger and better edition of it than had hitherto appeared. A wider scope was given to the work, and some of the comments on ancient proverbs were complete essays. His friends were invited to contribute proverbs from the results of their extensive reading, as Erasmus himself tells us.

When I, a Hollander, was publishing in Italy my work on proverbs, all the learned men who were within reach came forward to supply me with the authors not yet printed that they thought likely to be of use to me. Aldus had nothing in his treasures that he did not place at my service. The same thing was done by John Lascaris, by Baptista Egnatius, by Marcus Musurus, and by Brother Urbano. I was helped by some whom I knew not personally nor yet by name. I brought nothing with me to Venice but the confused and undigested mass of a future work, and that compiled only from authors already in print. With great rashness on my part we began together, I to write and Aldus to print. The whole affair was finished in about nine months, and in the meantime I had an attack of gravel to deal with, a malady I had not known before. It may easily be guessed how large a part of the usefulness of my work would have been lacking if my learned friends had not supplied me with manuscripts.[16]

As we have previously stated, this work was first printed at Paris by John Philippe in 1500, and consisted of about eight hundred proverbs. It was reprinted by the same publisher in 1505, without important changes, but in the following year it was subjected to a revision at the hands of Erasmus, and an addition made to it of twenty adages. This edition was issued from the press of J. Badius at Paris. The next edition was the one with which we are at present concerned, and on which Aldus and Erasmus were coöperating to make it a memorable one, worthy alike of author and printer. This was issued in September, 1508, as we learn from the colophon, and contained thirty-two hundred

[15] Eras. Ep. 256.

[16] *Chiliades adagiorum*, 1001, *"Festina lente,"* margin. tit. *Candor Italorum.*

and sixty proverbs instead of the original eight hundred. The title also was changed from *Adagiorum collectanea* to *Chiliades adagiorum,* a taking title certainly from the advertising point of view, and proving conclusively that Aldus was a good business manager as well as a good publisher.[17] While Erasmus was not the originator of such collections, his amazing industry, which enabled him to gather together more adages than anyone could dream existed, searching for them in the most obscure and recondite works both published and in manuscript, entitles him to a praise and a glory which no writer before or since has been able to diminish. As we have said, he now enlarged the scope of the work, and instead of its being a succession of mere sayings, it assumed more the character of a sequence of essays, each being more or less based on some popular proverb. So skillfully did he interweave proverb with comment that it was difficult to distinguish them in many instances, and so the comment, which was Erasmus himself, often obtained equal credence and authority with the proverb on which it more or less loosely hung. It was now that he, very guardedly at first, began to inveigh against human weaknesses and follies, and tentatively to essay the rôle of Lucian in assailing those in high places. The warring kings, nobles and statesmen of Europe, and even the ruling Pontiff, gave him ample play for his efforts in this direction, and the vices of society as then rampant furnished all the material that heart could desire. Erasmus undoubtedly was a man of superior mind, but was unfortunately too conscious and proud of the fact. The result in his case, as always in similar cases, was to make him envious of those above him and arrogant towards those of a lower social scale. So, when he could not hope to cope with those who were endowed with wealth and position, he took a fierce joy in showing to the world how little these great ones of the earth really were. And no chance did he ever let pass, when it could be safely done, of gratifying this propensity. For instance, in these *Adages,* which one would imagine would with difficulty lend themselves to anything personal, he several times enlarged his comment on a simple proverb into an essay on the vices and ostentation of the great, having in mind principally the Pope, the bishops, and the lower clergy. But he was lacking in moral bravery and, having shot his barbed weapon, he would immediately run to cover. It is exasperating to have him say some of the most convincing things and then to see him deprecate the anger that he had aroused. Let us give an example of what we mean. Under the proverb "Sileni Alcibiades" he says, "None are so little bishops as those who hold the primacy among bishops." Knowing that he has here struck at the Pope directly, he immediately cries you mercy by saying: "Again and again I entreat you, reader, not to imagine that this is said to blame any person in particular; we are pointing to facts, not to men; we hope there are none to whom these things are applicable." Again, when speaking of the monks, he says: "Some there are, and I wish they were not to be met with so commonly, whom, if judged by their shaggy beard, their pale face, their cowl, their bent heads, their girdle,

[17] *Collectanea* meaning a simple "Collection," while *Chiliades* might be translated as "Adages by the Thousand."

and their stern countenances, you would set down as St. Serapios and St. Pauls, but if you look more closely you will find to be mere rogues, gluttons, imposters, debauchees, robbers and tyrants." Then after hurling his brick he seeks shelter from the more or less justly indignant monks by plausibly adding: "Again you must take notice that nobody ought to be offended by this, since no one is mentioned by name. If any man be not of this quality, let him not deem these remarks to pertain to him; but if he recognize his fault herein, let him consider himself admonished." Again, after speaking of abbots and bishops as if they were as a class entirely bad, he hedges in this manner: "Whatever emolument, whatever honor, is due pious abbots or good bishops, let it be granted to them to the last farthing." And so he skillfully disarms the bad, who, he knows, will never admit their faults, and he makes friends to himself of the good, who, he equally well knows, are not impervious to praise. In his famous commentary on the proverb *Dulce bellum inexpertis,*[18] which is a stern reprobation of the evils of war, we are carried away by the convincing nature of his arguments, in which he states that war is iniquitous whether waged by Pope or king; and, when he scores Pope Julius II for his campaign against Bologna and his quarrel with the Venetians, he has our sympathy. But when he seeks to make capital for himself by drawing invidious distinctions between Julius II and Leo X, we somehow become suspicious that the flattery is to advance the interests of Erasmus. He puts it thus:

> How such things become a Christian Pontiff is not for men like me to say. But this I will say: his glory [that of Julius], however much it was, was connected with the destruction and misery of very many; while peace restored will bring more true glory to our Leo than his numerous wars throughout the whole world have procured for Julius, no matter how bravely they were stirred up, or how successfully they were waged.[19]

In his denunciation of sin and injustice, we miss, for some reason, the true note of sincerity. Two great men before his time had essayed the arraignment of the reigning Pontiff: St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Savonarola. Now Erasmus had neither the saintly life of the one nor the sublime fearlessness of the other to lend weight to his words. In this connection we may be permitted to quote a few sentences from Nolhac:

> Florence left no profound traces in the soul of Erasmus. The memory of Savonarola was still living; and the victims of the reaction, the last friends of the great Dominican, treasured in the bottom of their hearts his heroic traditions. However, Erasmus

[18] 3001.

[19] *Idem.,* margin. tit. *Iulius 2 belli auidissimus.* We must note that he did not venture a word against Pope Julius during that Pontiff's lifetime, for the edition of the *Adagia* printed by Aldus in 1508 is silent on the subject; and when he did assail him it was a perfectly safe procedure, since not only was that Pope now dead, but his powerful family, the della Rovere, from the different members of which Erasmus had received many favors, was no longer in the ascendant.

only heard speak of him as a disturber and a revolutionary; and the few times that he has made mention of this episode of Florentine history prove that he did not dwell much upon it. Let us add that Savonarola, being a monk, was obnoxious in his sight. The three passages where there is found mention of the Savonarola affair relate to the turbulence of the Dominican Order of those times, and are, as a consequence, malevolent. We seek in vain the trace of a regret on the part of Erasmus for the abortive attempt of the Florentine monk, and are also more struck by the moral differences than by the moral analogies existing between these two men.[20]

It is perhaps asking too much to demand of Erasmus that he measure up to the standard of a Bernard or a Savonarola; yet only men of spotless motives and undoubted probity of life ought to arrogate to themselves the right to pass judgment on the lives and motives of others.

But to return to the *Adages*. The book was a marvelous and merited success. Issued at a time when there were no public libraries (nor were there to be for two or three centuries), the work supplied the place of hundreds of volumes, and was equivalent to a university education to any man who was fortunate enough to be able to buy it. For generations it was the one indispensable book for every student and scholar, the least of its advantages being the fact that every Greek quotation or proverb was translated into Latin, which very much facilitated a wider knowledge of both languages. From time to time during the rest of his life Erasmus added to the richness and diversity of the work, until at his death it contained more than four thousand proverbs. It stands, and always will stand, as a monument to his wonderful industry; and each fresh perusal of it only serves to increase our wonder that one man alone could accomplish so much. Of all his works this is the one that made the world his debtor, and no one grudges him the meed of praise. This one book alone would have secured for him permanently a front rank among the world's scholars.

[20] *Érasme en Italie*, p. 12.

CHAPTER XIX

ITALY: HOME OF ALDUS; PADUA; ARCHBISHOP OF SAINT ANDREW'S; SIENA

The publishing of the *Adagia* did not end the relations between Erasmus and Aldus, for we find that he stayed on with him until December of that same year. Perhaps the reason which detained him was that Aldus was now engaged in issuing newer and better editions of Plautus and Terence, and we may remember that these were the favorite authors of Erasmus from his earliest schooldays. He also took this opportunity to give shape to what was eventually the work entitled *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo,* which was eventually printed in Basle by Nicholas Brylingerus in 1511.

The household into which Aldus had so hospitably introduced Erasmus is worthy of some notice before we leave Venice with the latter. Nolhac epitomizes it succinctly, so we shall quote his words:

> The household of Aldus was numerous: thirty-three persons in all, including the servants, according to the ancient custom. The wife of the printer, Maria Torresano d'Asola, whom he had married in 1499,[1] had borne him his first son, the little Manuzio de'Manuzi, who used to play on Erasmus' knee. The father-in-law of Aldus, Andreas d'Asola, took part in the work of the establishment which he himself was to manage after the death of his illustrious son-in-law. Francesco and Federigo d'Asola, his sons, also worked in the printing office. An agreeable air of gaiety pervaded the place, for Aldus had a pleasing wit. He used to amuse himself by imitating in his talk the quavering speech of an old man. Erasmus still remembered ten years afterward the drawling and stammering fashion with which he used sometimes to address him: *"Quomodo vales, Domine Erasme?"* And thereupon, in a voice still more shrill, that of Erasmus, he would reply for him: *"Si vales, ego valeo."* "That is the way we shall speak when we are old," he was wont to say. And our Erasmus remarks with melancholy that Aldus quitted his friends much before the time when one really stammers.[2]

This famous household was the resort of all the scholars of the day, and no matter what his rank or nationality, no savant who made the *grand tour* to Italy returned without visiting the illustrious Aldine press and partaking of the hospitality of its owner. We have already seen how Thomas Linacre would not return to England without first calling

[1] But Nolhac later gives 1505. Allen also gives the latter date.
[2] *Érasme en Italie,* p. 33.

on Aldus, and the course of many years had not staled the custom, for we see that Ulrich von Hutten in 1517 writes to Erasmus of his delightful visit to the celebrated printer. It was in 1495 that Aldus established his press in Venice, and already in 1500 he had formed his learned friends into a society which they called the Neacademia, to remind themselves of the famous Academy of Plato. The constitution of the society was written in Greek, and it was forbidden to the members to converse in any other tongue. During its career the Aldine Academy counted among its members the following choice scholars: Prince Alberto Pio, Pietro Bembo, Marino Sanuto, Scipio Carteromachos, Erasmus, Jerome Aleander, Giambattista Egnazio, Marcus Musurus, John of Crete, sometimes called Gregoropoulos, Thomas Linacre, Demetrios Chalcondyles, John Lascaris, and many others. But of them all Aldus was the sun around which these literary planets revolved, and from which they drew light and warmth. Into him had penetrated the true spirit of the Renaissance, for he was perhaps the very first printer who recognized the fact that a book might be in itself a thing of beauty, in addition to enshrining in enduring type the immortal thoughts of the past. Hence it is that, during all the generations since his day, the Aldine editions have been sought for and treasured for themselves as the standards and models of the printer's art, and the epoch of Aldus and that of the Renaissance have become interchangeable terms.

Concerning Erasmus' residence with Aldus, or rather with his wife's father, Andreas d'Asola, who was really the head of the household, there is an unpleasant episode, as, unfortunately, there is all too often in the story of Erasmus. Andreas d'Asola was a typical Italian, a scholar of high intellectual attainments, a man who was able after the untimely death of his brilliant son-in-law to continue successfully the printing establishment, and to hand it down unimpaired in fame and financial standing to the heirs of them both. Standing at the head of his numerous family of sons, grandsons, workers, servants, and dependents, it naturally devolved on him to furnish forth the daily table. The Italians are an abstemious race, and in no rank of Italian society is it the custom to overindulge in the pleasures of the table. Such abstemiousness is purely racial, arising from no feeling of parsimony, but rather from a conservatism resulting from the experience of generation after generation of a people who have found out what is best adapted to their racial and climatic needs. Compare their mode of eating with that of the more northern nations, such as the English, Dutch, and Germans; remember, furthermore, what Erasmus said of the food at Steyn and, later on of that at the College of Montaigu—and need we follow the distasteful subject any further? Were it not absolutely necessary for the elucidation of his character, one would willingly omit all account of his strange lack of taste in depicting the household of Aldus and Andreas d'Asola as one of disgusting and sordid miserliness. The table set might suffice for the modest wants of Aldus, of Aleander, and of the other inmates of the house, not to speak of the constant succession of illustrious guests from many lands who were drawn to Venice by the fame of the Aldine press; but it did not please Erasmus, who had evidently

been accustomed to gratify himself with a more plentiful and elaborate fare. Many years after the death of Aldus he had the execrable taste, in one of his colloquies entitled *Opulentia sordida,* or *The Wealthy Miser,* to hold up to ridicule the household and relatives of his former friend, barely concealing their names, but caricaturing them most cruelly and with his wonted exaggeration. We give the colloquy in its entirety, as translated by Bailey, prefacing it with the note that by Synodium is meant Venice, Antronius stands for Andreas d'Asola, the father-in-law of Aldus, Orthrogonus is Aldus himself, Verpius is the malicious sobriquet that he fastens on Aleander, Strategus is possibly Seraphin, or some Greek employed in supervising the work of the Greek compositors.

THE RICH MISER

James and Gilbert

Ja. How comes it about that you are so lean and meagre? You look as if you had lived upon dew with the grasshopper; you seem to be nothing but a mere skeleton. *Gi.* In the regions below the ghosts feed upon leeks and mallows; but I have been these ten months where I could not come at so much as them. *Ja.* Where is that, prithee? What, have you been in the galleys? *Gi.* No, I have been at Synodium. *Ja.* What, starved to death almost in so plentiful a country? *Gi.* It is true as I tell you. *Ja.* What was the occasion of it? What, had you no money? *Gi.* I neither wanted money nor friends. *Ja.* What the mischief was the matter then? *Gi.* Why, you must know I boarded with Antronius. *Ja.* What, with that rich old cuff? *Gi.* Yes, with that sordid hunks. *Ja.* It is very strange, methinks. *Gi.* Not strange at all; for by this sordid way of living they that have little or nothing to begin the world with scrape together so much wealth. *Ja.* But how came you to take a fancy to live so many months with such a landlord? *Gi.* There was a certain affair that obliged me to it, and I had a fancy to do likewise. *Ja.* But, prithee, tell me after what manner he lives.

Gi. I will tell you, since it is a pleasure to recount the hardships one has sustained. *Ja.* It will certainly be a pleasure to me to hear it. *Gi.* Providence so ordered it that the wind sat full north for three months together, only it did not blow from the same point above eight days together; but I cannot tell the reason of it. *Ja.* How then could it blow north for three months together? *Gi.* Why upon the eighth day, as if by agreement, it shifted its station; where, after it had continued some seven or eight hours, then it veered to the old point again. *Ja.* In such a place as that your callico body had need have a good fire to keep it warm. *Gi.* We had had fire enough if we had but had wood enough. But our landlord Antronius, to save charges, used to grub old stumps of trees in the common, that nobody thought worth while to get but himself, and would get them by night. And of these, green as they were, our fire was commonly made, which used to smoke plentifully, but would not flame out; so that though it did not warm us at all, yet we could not say there was

no fire. One of these fires would last us a whole day, they burnt so deliberately.

Ja. This was a bad place for a man to pass the winter in. *Gi.* It was so; but it was a great deal worse to pass a summer in. *Ja.* Why so? *Gi.* Because there was such a multitude of fleas and bugs that there was no being quiet in the day-time, nor sleeping in the night. *Ja.* What a wretched wealth was here? *Gi.* Few were wealthier in this sort of cattle. *Ja.* Sure your women were lazy sluts. *Gi.* They were mewed up in an apartment by themselves, and seldom came among the men; so that you have nothing of them but the name of women; and the men are forced to go without those services which properly belong to that sex in other families. *Ja.* But how could Antronius away with all this nastiness? *Gi.* Pshaw, he was used to it from his cradle, and minded nothing in the world but getting of money. He loved to be anywhere but at home, and traded in everything you can think of. You know that city is a great town of the greatest commerce and business. What is his name, the famous painter, who thought that day was lost wherein he did not employ his pencil; and our Antronius looked upon himself undone if one single day passed over his head without some profit. And if such a disaster happened to him, he did not fail one way or other to make it up at home.

Ja. What did he do? *Gi.* Why, he had a cistern of water in the house, as most people in that city have, whence he used to draw so many buckets of water, and put into his hogsheads of wine. This was a most certain profit. *Ja.* I suppose the wine was something of the strongest then? *Gi.* Far from that, for it was as dead as ditch water; for he never bought any but what was decayed to his hand, that he might buy it at an easier rate. And that he might not lose a drop of this, he used to mix and jumble the grounds of at least ten years standing, and set them a fermenting, that it might pass for new wine upon the lees, and would not lose a drop of the dregs neither. *Ja.* If we may believe the physicians, such wine will certainly breed the stone. *Gi.* There were no doctors there, I will assure you; and in the most healthful years two or three at least of the family died of that distemper; but he never troubled his head about that, how many burials went out of the house. *Ja.* No! *Gi.* He made a penny even of the dead. And there was no gain he was ashamed to take, though it was never so small. *Ja.* Under your favor, that was downright theft though. *Gi.* Your merchants term it turning an honest penny.

Ja. But what sort of liquor did Antronius drink all the while? *Gi.* Almost the very same nectar that I told you of. *Ja.* Did he find no harm by it? *Gi.* He was as hard as flint, he could have lived upon chopped hay; and, as I told you before, he had been used to fare hard from his infancy. And he looked upon this dashing and brewing to be a certain profit to him. *Ja.* How so, I beseech you? *Gi.* If you reckon his wife, his sons, his daughters, his son-in-law, his men-servants, and his maid-servants, he had about thirty-three

mouths in the family to feed. Now the more he corrected his wine with water the less of it was drunk, and the longer it was drawing off; so then if you compute a large bucket of water thrown in every day it will amount to no small sum, let me tell you, at the year's end. *Ja.* A sordid fellow! *Gi.* This was not all, he made the same advantage of his bread too. *Ja.* How could he do that? *Gi.* He bought musty wheat, such as nobody else would buy but himself. Now, in the first place, here was a present gain, because he bought it so much cheaper, and then he had an art to cure the mustiness. *Ja.* But, prithee, how did he do that? *Gi.* There is a sort of chalk, not altogether unlike to corn, which you may see horses are delighted with when they gnaw it out of the walls, and drink more freely out of that pond-water where this chalk is to be found. He mixed one-third part at least of this earth with his bread. *Ja.* And do you call this curing of it?

Gi. This is certain, that it made the mustiness of the corn be not altogether so perceivable; and now, was not this a considerable profit? He had another stratagem besides that, for he baked his own bread at home, which, in the very midst of summer, he never did oftener than twice in a month. *Ja.* Sure it must be more like stones than bread for hardness. *Gi.* Nay, harder than a stone, if possible; but we had a remedy for that too. *Ja.* What was that? *Gi.* We used to soak slices of this bread in bowls of wine. *Ja.* The devil a barrel the better herring. But how did the servants like this treatment? *Gi.* I will first tell you how the top folks of the family were served, and then you may easily guess how the servants fared. *Ja.* I long to hear it. *Gi.* There was not a word to be mentioned about breakfast, and as for dinner that was generally deferred till one o'clock in the afternoon. *Ja.* Why so? *Gi.* We waited for the master of the family's coming home, and then we seldom went to supper before ten.

Ja. But how did you bear it? you used to be very impatient for your victuals. *Gi.* I called ever and anon upon Orthrogonus, our landlord's son-in-law, who lay upon the same floor with myself: Soho, monsieur, said I, do you make no dining to-day at Synodium? He answered, Antronius will be here in a minute. Then finding not the least motion towards dinner, and my guts very mutinous, Hark you, Orthrogonus, said I, do you design to starve us to-day! Then he would persuade me it was not so late, or put me off with some such pretense. Then, not being able to bear the bawling my bowels made, I interrupted him again: What, do you mean, said I, to starve us to death? When he found he had no more excuses to make, he went down to the servants and ordered them to lay the cloth. But at last, when no Antronius came, and dinner seemed to be as far off as ever, Orthrogonus, wearied with the noise I made in his ears, went to the apartment where his wife, and mother, and children were, bidding them get dinner ready.

Ja. Well, now I expect to hear of the dinner. *Gi.* Pray do not be so hasty. Then there came a lame fellow, just such another as

Vulcan, who laid the cloth, for that it seems was his province; this was the first hope we had of dinner; and at last, after I had bawled a long time, a glass bottle of fair water is brought in. *Ja.* Well, now there is more hope. *Gi.* But I tell you, do not be too hasty. Again, not without a great deal of knocking and calling, in comes a bottle of the wine I spoke of, as thick with dregs as puddle-water. *Ja.* That is well, however. *Gi.* But not a bit of bread came along with it, though there was no great danger we should touch it, for scarce anybody would had they been ever so hungry. Then I fell to calling till I was hoarse again; and at last the bread comes, but such as a bear could scarce bite of. *Ja.* Well, now there was no danger of starving.

Gi. Late in the afternoon home comes Antronius, and generally with this unlucky pretence, that his belly ached. *Ja.* But what was that to you? *Gi.* This much, that we were to go supperless to bed, for what could you expect when the master of the house is out of order? *Ja.* But was he sick in good earnest? *Gi.* So sick that he would have devoured your three capons to his own share, if you would have treated him. *Ja.* I am impatient to hear your bill of fare. *Gi.* First of all there is a plateful of grey peas brought in, such as old women cry about the streets, and this was for our landlord's own eating; he pretended that this was his remedy against all diseases. *Ja.* How many guests were there of you at table? *Gi.* Sometimes eight or nine; among whom was one Verpius, a learned gentleman, to whose character I suppose you are no stranger, and our landlord's eldest son. *Ja.* What was their mess? *Gi.* Why, the same that Melchisedek offered to Abraham, after he had conquered the five kings; and was not that enough for any reasonable man?

Ja. But was there no meat? *Gi.* There was meat, but there was but a very little of it. *Ja.* What was it? *Gi.* I remember we were only nine of us at table, when there were no more than seven small lettuce leaves swimming in vinegar, but not a drop of oil to make them slip down. *Ja.* But did your landlord eat all his grey peas himself? *Gi.* You must know there was scarce a farthing worth of them; however, he did not absolutely forbid those that sat next him to taste them, but it looked uncivil to rob a sick man of his victuals. *Ja.* But were not your lettuce leaves split to make the greater show? *Gi.* Why, truly, they were not; but when those that sat at the upper end of the table had eaten up the leaves, the rest sopped their bread in the vinegar. *Ja.* But what, I pray, came after these lettuce leaves? *Gi.* What! what should come but cheese, the last dish at dinner?

Ja. But was this your daily fare? *Gi.* Generally speaking, it was; but now and then, if the old gentleman had the good luck to get money in the way of trade that day, he would be a little more generous. *Ja.* How did you fare then? *Gi.* Why, then he would send out to buy a pennyworth of fresh grapes, at nine bunches a penny; this made the whole family sing O be joyful. *Ja.* Why not?

Gi. But then you must understand too, that this was never but when grapes were dog-cheap. *Ja.* What, then, did he never launch out but in autumn? *Gi.* Yes, he will thus launch out at some other times too; for you must know that there are fellows that catch a small sort of shell-fish most commonly on the shores, and cry them about the streets, and he would now and then buy an halfpennyworth of these; then you would swear there had been a wedding-dinner in the family. There was a fire made in the kitchen, though not very much of it neither, for these do not ask much boiling; and these dainties come always after the cheese instead of a dessert. *Ja.* A very fine dessert, indeed! But do you never use to have any flesh or fish?

Gi. At last the old gentleman, being overcome by my clamoring, began to live a little more nobly; and whenever he had a mind to show his generosity in good earnest, this was our bill of fare. *Ja.* I long to hear what that is. *Gi.* Imprimis, we had a dish of soup which they call a service, but I do not know why. *Ja.* A very rich one, I suppose. *Gi.* Very high seasoned with the following spices:— They took you a large kettle of water, and set it over the fire; into this they fling a good quantity of skimmed-milk cheese, grown as hard as a brickbat, that you can scarce cut it with a hatchet; and when these fragments of cheese grow a little softer by soaking and seething, they alter the property of the liquor that it is not then fair water. Now this soup is served in as a preparative for the stomach. *Ja.* This was a soup for sows. *Gi.* And the next course is a piece of stale tripe that has been boiled a fortnight. *Ja.* Why, then, it must needs stink. *Gi.* It does stink, but they have a remedy for that too. *Ja.* What is that, pray? *Gi.* I would tell you, but I am afraid you will put it into practice. *Ja.* Ay, marry, sir! *Gi.* They would take an egg and beat it up in warm water, and daub the tripe over with the liquor; and so they put the cheat upon the eye, indeed, but cannot cheat the nose, for the stink will force its way through all. If it happened to be a fish-day, we had sometimes three whitings, and but small ones neither, although there were seven or eight of us at table. *Ja.* What, nothing else? *Gi.* Nothing but that cheese as hard as a stone.

Ja. The oddest epicure I ever heard of. But how could so slender provision be enough for so many guests of you, and especially not having ate any breakfast? *Gi.* Well, to satisfy you, I tell you that the remainder fed the mother-in-law, the daughter-in-law, the youngest son, a servant-maid, and a litter of children. *Ja.* Nay, now instead of lessening, you have heightened, my admiration. *Gi.* It is scarce possible for me to explain this difficulty to you, unless I first represent to you in what order we sat at table. *Ja.* Pray, represent it then. *Gi.* Antronius, he sat at the upper end of the table, and I sat at his right hand, as being principal guest; over against Antronius sat Orthrogonus; next Orthrogonus, Verpius; next to Verpius, Strategus, a Grecian; Antronius's eldest son sat at his left hand. If any stranger came to dine with us, he was placed according to

his quality. As for the soup, there was no great danger of its being eaten up, nor no great difference in the messes, but only that in the dishes of the principal guests there were some bits of this cheese floating up and down. And besides, there was a sort of barricade made betwixt this soup by bottles of wine and water, that none but three, before whom the dish stood, could participate, unless he would be impudent indeed, and go beyond his bounds. Nor did this dish stay long there, but was soon taken away, that something might be left for the family.

Ja. What did the rest eat all this while? *Gi.* They regaled themselves after their own fashion. *Ja.* How was that? *Gi.* Why they sopped the chalky bread in that sour dreggy wine. *Ja.* Sure your dinner used to be over in a minute. *Gi.* It oftentimes held above an hour. *Ja.* How could it be? *Gi.* The soup being taken away, which, as I told you before, might have stood without any great danger, cheese was brought to the table, and that ran no great risk, for it was so hard it would bid defiance to a carving-knife. Every man's portion of that dreggy wine and bread stood before him still; and over these dainties they diverted themselves with telling stories, and in the meantime the women eat their dinner. *Ja.* But how did the servants fare in the meantime? *Gi.* They had nothing in common with us, but dined and supped at their own hours. But this I can tell you, they scarce spent half an hour's time in a whole day at victuals. *Ja.* But what sort of provisions had they? *Gi.* You may easily guess that. *Ja.* Your Germans think an hour little enough to breakfast in, and they commonly take as much time to their beaver, an hour and a half at their dinner, and at least two hours at supper; and unless their bellies are well filled with good wine, flesh, and fish, they run away from their masters, and go into the army.

Gi. Every nation has its peculiar customs; the Italians lay out but very little upon their bellies; they love money better than pleasure; and this temperance they owe rather to nature than custom. *Ja.* Now, truly, I do not wonder you are come home so lean, but rather that you are come home alive, especially since you were so used to capons, partridges, pigeons, and pheasants. *Gi.* Why, in truth, I had very fairly trooped off, unless I had found me out a remedy. *Ja.* It is but poor living where such frequent recourse must be had to remedies. *Gi.* I brought matters about so that I had the fourth part of a boiled pullet allowed to every meal, to keep up my languishing spirits. *Ja.* Ay, marry, now you begin to live! *Gi.* Not altogether so well as you imagine; for old Gripe bought the least he could lay his hands on, to save expenses, such that six of them would not serve a Polander of a tolerable stomach for a breakfast; and when he had bought them, he would give them no corn, because he would not put himself to extraordinary charges; so a wing or a leg of the fowl that was half starved before it was put into the pot, was boiled for my dinner, and the liver always went to Orthrogonus's little son; and as for the broth, the women were perpetually lapping it up, and every now and then they put in fresh water; so

that by the time it came to me it was as dry as a chip, and no more taste in it than the foot of a joint-stool. And as for the broth, it was nothing but a little water bewitched. *Ja.* And yet I hear that you have all sorts of fowl there in great plenty, very good and very cheap. *Gi.* They are so, but money is hard to come by. *Ja.* You have done penance enough, one would think, if you had murdered the pope, or pissed against St. Peter's tomb-stone.

Gi. But hear the rest of the farce out. You know there are five days in the week that we may eat flesh on. *Ja.* What then? *Gi.* He only bought two pullets for the whole week. On Thursday he would pretend he forgot to go to market, lest I should either have a whole pullet on that day, or any should be left. *Ja.* In short, I think your landlord was a greater miser than Euclio in Plautus. But what course did you take to keep yourself alive on fish-days? *Gi.* I employed a certain friend to buy me every day three eggs with my own money—two for my dinner, and one for my supper. But here also the women put their tricks upon me; for instead of my new-laid eggs that I paid a good price for, they would give me rotten ones, that I thought I came well off if one of my three eggs proved eatable. I also at last got a small cask of good wine bought for my own drinking, but the women broke open my cellar-door, and in a few days drank it all up, and my landlord, Antronius, did not seem to be much displeased at the matter.

Ja. But was there nobody in the family that took pity on you? *Gi.* Take pity on me, say you? No; they thought me a glutton and a cormorant, who by myself devoured so much victuals. And upon that account Orthrogonus would ever and anon give me good advice, that I should consider the climate where I lived, and therefore have regard to myself; telling me of several of my countrymen who had by their over-eating in that country either procured their own deaths, or brought upon themselves very dangerous distempers. But when he found me supporting my outward tabernacle, that was fatigued, starved, and distempered, with some knick-knacks that were sold at the confectioners, he sets a physician, a friend and acquaintance of mine, to persuade me to live moderately. The doctor took a great deal of pains with me. I soon perceived he had been set on to do it, so I made him not a word of answer.

But when he was still urging me very hard, and was always harping on the same string, I said to him, Worthy doctor, pray tell me, are you in jest or in earnest? Oh, in earnest, said he. Well then, replied I, what would you have me do? Why, to leave off suppers for good and all, and to mix at least one-half water with your wine. I could not forbear laughing at this excellent advice, and said to him, If you want to see me decently laid in a churchyard, you propose a ready way for it; for I am sure it would be present death to me, in the circumstances of this poor, lean, dispirited body, to leave off suppers; and I have tried that so often, that in short I have no mind to make the experiment again. What, pray, do you think would become of me, if, after such dinners as we have here, I should go

supperless to bed? And then to bid me mingle water with such weak insipid wine! pray, tell me, is it not much better to drink clear water from the spring than to debauch it with this sour dreggy stuff? I do not doubt but Orthrogonus put you upon giving me this advice.

At this the doctor smiled, and allowed me better terms. Most learned Gilbert, said he, I did not say this to you, that you should totally leave off eating suppers; you may eat an egg and drink a glass of wine, for this is my own manner of living. I have an egg boiled for my supper—one-half of the yolk I eat myself, and give the other half to my son; then I drink half a glass of wine, and by the help of this refreshment I study till late in the night. *Ja.* But did this doctor speak the truth? *Gi.* Yes, the very truth; for as I was once coming home from church, a gentleman that bore me company told me the doctor dwelt there; I had a mind to see his quarters, so I knocked at the door, and in I went. I remember it was on a Sunday; I found the doctor, his son, and a servant at dinner; the bill of fare was a couple of eggs, and nothing at all else. *Ja.* Why, sure they must be mere skeletons. *Gi.* No; really they were both plump and in good liking, fresh colored, their eyes brisk and lively. *Ja.* I can scarce believe it. *Gi.* I tell you nothing but what I know to be true. Nay, he is not the only man that lives after this manner, but many others, men of fashion and substance in the world, do the same. Take my word for it, much eating and drinking is rather an effect of custom than that of nature. If a person accustom himself by little and little, he may come in time to do as much as Milo—to eat up an ox in a day's time. *Ja.* Good God! if it be possible for a man to preserve his health with so little sustenance, what a great deal of unnecessary expense are the Germans, English, Danes, and Poles at upon their bellies? *Gi.* A great deal without doubt, and that to the apparent prejudice of their health and understanding.

Ja. But what is the matter that you could not content yourself with that way of living? *Gi.* Because I had accustomed myself to another manner, and it was too late to alter my way of living then. But besides, I did not so much dislike the quantity of our provision as the quality of it. Two eggs had been enough for a meal for me, if they had been fresh-laid; one glass of wine had been enough, if we had not nasty lees given us instead of wine; half the bread would have served me, if it had not been mixed with chalk. *Ja.* Lord! that Antronius should be such a sordid wretch amidst so much wealth! *Gi.* I verily believe he was worth eighty thousand ducats; and to speak within compass, he never got less than ten hundred ducats a year besides. *Ja.* But did those young sparks for whom he scraped all this together live at the same sparing rate? *Gi.* Yes, at home they did, but it was only there; for when they got abroad they would eat, drink, whore, and game notably; and while their old father thought much to spend sixpence at home to treat the best friend he had, these sparks would make nothing to lose sixty ducats in a night at gaming. *Ja.* This is the usual fate of estates that are got by miserly living; they are commonly thus spent. But now you are got

safe out of these great difficulties, whither are you steering your course? *Gi.* I am going to an old club of merry cocks, to endeavor to fetch up what I have lost.

This is inexcusable, and not to be justified on the ground that he had to defend himself from his enemies, for Scaliger, Alberto Pio, and Doletus had up to this time published nothing against him. On the contrary, it is deemed probable that the many instances of ingratitude which he was consistently manifesting towards former friends were the proximate cause for arousing personal hostility towards himself. Retribution was not slow in overtaking him, and if we may be permitted to anticipate a little we can show how his shabby charges against the home of Aldus were retorted on himself with accrued interest, and how his petty insinuations against Andreas d'Asola's table sank into insignificance under the grosser and more disgraceful charges made against him personally by Julius Caesar Scaliger. And though due allowance must be made for the anger of Scaliger, who had felt himself slighted by Erasmus and was thus led to publish reports which had come to him concerning the private life of the latter while an inmate of the Aldine home, yet his statements cannot be entirely ruled out. He claims that he derived his information about Erasmus from some of the frequent guests at the table of Aldus who had afterwards been his teachers; and the accuracy of some of his details was so keen that it gave Erasmus the idea that Aleander was the writer of the pamphlet which Scaliger had put forth, deeming that none but a fellow-lodger like Aleander could possibly have the inside knowledge of the Aldine establishment displayed in the offending pamphlet. But Scaliger very soon convinced him of his error, and showed him that he needed no one's assistance in acquiring and marshaling the facts contained in his philippic. Here are a few of the things he gave Erasmus to chew upon and to explain away as best he could, serving him up to himself in the following picture:

> When, having thrown your monk's habit into the bushes, you hid yourself in Aldus' printing office, like a bear that has broken his chain; when the Italian workmen, who used to spend the night on the same work of correcting the forms as yourself, used to cry out upon you in indignation; when they used to abominate you as a companion at table and a shirker at work, and when only with difficulty they kept their hands off you. . . . But if you were angry with the worthless servants who would not permit you the drink so that you would not go to sleep, you would now set off their offense against the liberality of Aldus, who had kindly given you employment on the work? . . . Although you did the work of only half a man in reading proof in the printing office of Aldus, yet in drinking you were a three-bellied Geryon, and were wont to say that you took this stimulant following the example of Plato, who wrote that wine excites genius, etc.[3]

We have to agree with Nolhac that some of these passages are grossly

[3] Nisard, *Les gladiateurs,* p. 330. Nolhac. *Érasme en Italie,* p. 37.

insulting, but that one would be mistaken if he failed to attach due importance to them. And he gives these reasons:

> Scaliger says that he had for preceptors those very savants who had seen Erasmus at Venice, and that he had all the details from Aldus himself. This statement may be looked on with suspicion, but certain allusions are made which are intelligible only to Erasmus, and are for the purpose of wounding him; and the latter recognizes in a way that the author is acquainted with the home of Aldus, avowing implicitly that there is a portion of truth in the accusations. Let us recall some of it. Erasmus, who later liked Burgundy wine, was contented at Venice with the wines of Cyprus and Candia; and he may have given to the sober Venetians who surrounded him the idea that he drank too much of them. But nothing authorizes one to incriminate seriously his moderation, still less to describe him as a triple Geryon. As for the vicious details of the *Opulentia sordida* by which Erasmus felt that he ought to reply to his enemies, if they do more honor to his satiric vein than to his friendship, the violence of his adversaries serves at least to excuse them.[4]

We can readily agree with all of Nolhac's statements except the last, wherein he has evidently forgotten that Erasmus was the aggressor, since Scaliger did not print his first wrathy *Oration* until 1531, at which time Erasmus' *Opulentina sordida* had been in everybody's hands for many years. Nisard, who uses none but the most vivid colors in his sketches, has painted for us an Erasmus without any possible speck or flaw. *Per contra,* he has depicted Scaliger in the most glaringly violent tones, so that we rise from a perusal of Nisard's estimate of the two men with the settled conviction that Erasmus should always hereafter be pictured in our minds wearing a halo, while Scaliger ought to always appear before our mental camera wearing the horns, the cloven foot, and the tail of his satanic majesty. It has been said of Nisard that he is the Froude of French historical literature, but more brilliant and consequently more likely to mislead. What he says about the quarrel of Erasmus and Scaliger is beautifully said, but it is not history.[5] Nolhac, with fully as much regard for Erasmus, is not blind to his defects, and is consequently a much safer guide. But we must not imitate Nisard by giving more credit to Scaliger than is due him. It was nothing so disinterested as the defending of the maligned hospitality of Aldus and d'Asola that tempted him to assail Erasmus, but a far different matter. In 1528 Erasmus published a work entitled *Ciceronianus,* the aim and object of which was to combat the idea of some Latin purists, who in their writings and conversation would admit no word that was not used by Cicero. As a consequence, their style was both verbose and stilted, since, to use a more modern parallel, one cannot very well ask for the loan of a match in the flowing periods of Burke or Bossuet without running the risk of appearing ridiculous. Erasmus made out an excellent case against the Ciceronians, and all would have been well had he

[4] *Op. cit.,* p. 38.

[5] See Nisard, *Les gladiateurs,* Art. "Scaliger."

been satisfied with that. But unfortunately for himself he had the bad judgment to assume the office of judging the merits and demerits of the contemporary Latin writers of Europe, mentioning each by name. No one was pleased, not even those he praised, for they deemed his rôle an arrogant one and an assumption of a superiority over them which they were not disposed to acknowledge. As for those who were held up for criticism, they were simply furious. But more furious still than they were some fairly well-known writers whom he had not even deigned to mention either in praise or dispraise—and among these latter was Scaliger. This man had a great admiration for Cicero, and would not permit his idol to be dethroned so summarily. Nisard intimates that it was really pique at not being mentioned at all by Erasmus that led him to attack him so fiercely. This is not very convincing, and Nisard has no authoritative grounds for his surmise. Possibly a better reason may be advanced. Just as it is probable that Erasmus inherited his prejudices against Pope Julius II from Bombace, Ammonius, and other Italians who for various reasons were hostile to that Pontiff, so it is equally probable that Scaliger inherited from the della Rovere family the antipathy which he always manifested towards Erasmus. The inciting cause may more plausibly be considered the publication of the *Iulius exclusus.*

We must remember that the della Rovere family had been particularly friendly to Erasmus, and had shown it in many ways, as the reader will remember, even to the extent of offering him benefices if he would stay in Rome. Now Scaliger went to Agen in the south of France as physician and friend to Antonio della Rovere, the Bishop of that See, in 1525, when the family were still smarting from the effects of that biting satire, the *Iulius exclusus.* What more natural, then, than that Scaliger should take up the cudgels for his friend the Bishop, and attempt to give Erasmus a dose of his own medicine? So when Erasmus in 1528 had published his *Ciceronianus,* it must have seemed to Scaliger that the great writer had been delivered most opportunely into his hands for what he considered a healthy and most justifiable scarification.

It was in his first *Oration,* which should rather have been called a diatribe, that Scaliger used the language which we have quoted above. When argument failed he descended to abuse; and the Ciceronians of similar dispositions but more tact looked on and rejoiced with an unholy joy. Not knowing Scaliger, Erasmus' suspicious mind cast around to see who might have had the personal knowledge of the facts there made known, and naturally his suspicions fell on Aleander, who had formerly lived with him in the house of Aldus. When Scaliger heard this he was more angry than ever, and to defend his authorship of the *Oration* he wrote another, which is still more insulting and contemptuous than the first. There was a delay in printing this, and Erasmus did not live to see it. The writers of noble minds and elevated sentiments on both sides finally grew tired of seeing Erasmus thus baited, and deprecated further attacks. A mutual friend, Omphalius, devoted himself to bring about a reconciliation between the two, and in a measure succeeded, since he

induced Scaliger to write a letter to Erasmus, in which he admitted that he had been too abusive, that he acknowledged his important services to literature, that he esteemed his works highly, and that for the future he would be his friend, rather than his enemy. But although he regretted his heat, in no place or manner did he retract the facts which he had alleged against him, although he was so moved by the news of his death shortly afterwards, that he wrote a touching epitaph on him, in which he deplores Erasmus' untimely passing away before they had become perfectly reconciled. Thus many years after the death of Aldus, retribution in the person of Scaliger was exacted from Erasmus for the slight he had put upon him in his *Opulentia sordida.* Yet Erasmus was no drunkard; and though the Italian workmen may have stood amazed at his capacity for absorbing the wines of their country—and he himself relates that his excess therein did eventually cause him the gravel—such use did not lower him in the estimation of his best friends there; and if he was able to transmute the Greek vintages into his famous *Adages,* the world is so much the gainer. Something will have to be allowed to the feeling of disapprobation with which almost everything that a stranger does in a foreign country is set down and noted.

But we have been anticipating, and although the Scaliger incident has given us an opportunity to give our readers a foretaste of both the *Colloquies* and the *Ciceronianus,* yet these works are respectively sixteen and twenty years in the future. So we return to Erasmus as he is about to leave Venice for Padua. Beatus Rhenanus tells us [6] that Erasmus went to Padua to take charge of the studies of the youthful Archbishop of St. Andrew's, an illegitimate son of the reigning monarch of Scotland, James IV, and that this pupil was then only eighteen years old, in spite of which fact he had already been entrusted with high ecclesiastical dignities. Erasmus describes him as "of lofty soul, far removed from sordid habits, and with no arrogance or disdain. He was a young man of deep feelings which he sometimes sought to hide, and could never be moved to anger. . . . He was endowed with considerable personal charm, was dignified in manner, tall in stature, and of the most placid disposition, yet with a mind most active in the acquisition of all sorts of learning." [7]

We are not informed how this connection came about; and in a country where scholars were numerous and of wide reputation it seems strange that Erasmus should have been chosen as tutor for the Archbishop, and that he should so soon have bound himself down to what he always considered a clog on his own personal freedom. But if we remember that Archbishop Elphinstone was Privy Seal to James IV, the father of the young man, and that Erasmus' old friend Hector Boece was the Principal of Elphinstone's newly founded University of Aberdeen and that prelate's former secretary, we shall have established a possible connection for this lucky event.

From an account left us by Beatus Rhenanus, and from a letter which

[6] Eras. Ep. IV.

[7] See *Adages,* under *"Spartam nactus es, hanc orna,"* margin. tit. *Alexander archiepiscopus D. Andreæ.*

Erasmus wrote to Jodocus Gaverus in 1525 in which he gives some details of his stay in Padua, we may conclude that his residence there was a very pleasant one. As usual, he made the acquaintance of all the leading scholars of the University, which was at that time as celebrated as the University of Bologna. Chief among the savants at Padua was Marcus Musurus, the Professor of Greek. It is noticeable that in all his travels Erasmus sought every occasion to meet Greek scholars, and especially those who were native Greeks. This he undoubtedly did in order to perfect his knowledge of that tongue; and this leads us to the consideration of a statement of Rhenanus to the effect that Erasmus brought into Italy more dignified erudition than others were wont to carry away from it. We are apt to ascribe this to his too partial biographers; yet Erasmus himself claimed as much in his reply to the Prince of Carpi, where he says, "I owe nothing of my attainments to Italy; would that I owed much to that country! There were those there from whom I could have learned something, but so also were there in England, and in France, and in Germany." [8] From this we are to infer that he was sufficient unto himself and that, though he could have learned from the scholars of those countries, he learned nothing. Such an inference, if well grounded, would convict Erasmus, or any other man, of unbounded conceit. Nolhac differs strongly from him on this point, and we are fully in accord with that writer when he says of Erasmus: "Is there not some voluntary exaggeration in this whimsey of his? And that year at Bologna, for example, in a new environment, with every sort of intellectual resource at hand, has it not been for him, in spite of war and pestilence, one of the most fruitful in his life as a humanist?" [9]

Erasmus was a great exploiter of others, but was not always grateful to them for the services rendered. But his company and conversation were always agreeable and made friends for him very quickly. None could be a more pleasant companion than he when occasion served. He gives us a good specimen of his ability in this direction during one of his visits to the home of Marcus Musurus where he was to dine:

> One day when I went to sup at his [Musurus'] house, and his father, a tiny old man who knew nothing but Greek, was present, and just at the moment when each of the guests in turn was washing his hands in the basin, I, in order to avoid useless delay, seized the father by the hand and said to him in Greek, "Now for us two old fellows." Whereupon the old man, wonderfully pleased, bathed his hands with me. Although at that time I was not much older than Musurus, he took hold of a remarkably learned youth named Zacharias and said, "We two young men will do the same." [10]

And so, with his deft graciousness of manner which none knew how and when to assume better than he, Erasmus made a conquest of the affections of the old father, and at the same time immeasurably gratified the feelings of the son. Musurus made a great name for himself though

[8] See *Responsio ad epistolam paraeneticam Alberti Pii Carporum principis*, Basle, 1526. In LB Vol. IX, col. 1137.

[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

[10] Eras. Ep. 1347, l. 245.

he died early, but not before Pope Leo had recognized his scholarship by rewarding him with high preferment in the Church. His knowledge of the Latin language was not inferior to his command of his native Greek, and he was in intimate touch with the entire range of ancient philosophy.

Another attraction for Erasmus at Padua was the charming and scholarly company of Germain de Brie, or Brixius, as Erasmus styled him. They had first met at Venice, at the house of John Lascaris, where Brixius was a sort of servant-pupil to the Greek savant, no doubt for the purpose of perfecting himself in Greek. He left Venice about the same time as Erasmus and went to Padua, where he studied that language under Musurus, and eventually to Rome for further study. Returning to France he entered the service of Cardinal Louis of Amboise, from whom he received a benefice, but later attached himself to John de Canay, Chancellor of France, in a similar capacity. His literary merits finally won him the post of secretary to the Queen of France. He died in 1538, two years afterwards. They were lifelong friends, although Brixius felt compelled to differ from Erasmus in his estimate of the relative merits of Budé and Badius, as treated by Erasmus in his *Ciceronianus*. He was a brilliant though not prolific writer, whose learning and conversation seem to have endeared him to Erasmus.

Still another acquaintance which he made here was that of Richard Pace, an Englishman who was able to be of service to him often in the future, as we shall see. This talented scholar and diplomat was a little younger than Erasmus.[11] Through the munificence of Bishop Langton and the Abbot of Glastonbury he was enabled to continue his studies after Latimer and Tunstall had returned to England, and it was at Padua, while studying under Leonicus, that he first met Erasmus. He had left Padua, however, some months before the latter decided to leave, and had gone to pursue his studies at the University of Ferrara under Leonicenus, where we shall meet him again.

At Padua Erasmus also met again his friend Scipio Carteromachos, whose acquaintance he had first made at Bologna. Another of the scholars whose friendship he secured at this time was Luis Texeira, who was the preceptor of John III of Portugal while the young prince was attending the University of Padua. Erasmus made much of Texeira in a dedication of the works of St. John Chrysostom to the same young prince, after he had ascended the throne of Portugal.

Still another acquaintance was Raphael Reggio, a man who was so infatuated with the study of Greek that, although he was a septuagenarian, he used to brave all kinds of weather in order to reach the University at seven o'clock in the morning, that he might hear Musurus lecture on his favorite subject. And although he had been Professor of Latin in

[11] Allen sets his birth as 1482, but with a point of interrogation following the date. Such a date can hardly be possible, since he had been secretary to the Bishop of Winchester before the latter sent him to Italy to pursue his studies at Padua in 1498, and this latter date is absolute since he was met and helped in his studies there by William Latimer and Cuthbert Tunstall. It is not probable that he was a bishop's secretary at the immature age of thirteen or fourteen.

the University, and was now associated with Erasmus in the education of the young Archbishop of St. Andrew's, he did not disdain to become a student once more in order to gratify his love of learning. Greek had become the fashionable study, the rich quarry from which every scholar hoped to hew out for himself a reputation in polite learning, and was hence the goal of the efforts and aspirations of every man of education. So at Padua, as elsewhere, it was the principal study of Erasmus; and a close perusal of his correspondence at this period fails to show that any other subject appealed to him. Rhenanus tells us that he spent this period in correcting the text of Pausanias, Eustathius, the scholiast on Lycophron, as well as the scholiast on Euripides, Pindar, Sophocles, and Theocritus, the manuscripts being supplied to him principally from the library of Aldus. Nolhac says that Erasmus had frequent occasion to seek light in his difficulties from Carteromachos and Musurus, and that they rarely failed him, especially the latter, who, as Rhenanus testifies, had read everything—lexicons, myths, history, and customs—and was acquainted with antiquity to its very origins.[12]

And yet Erasmus intimates that he learned nothing in Italy. It would not have been possible for any man to associate with the scholars that he met in Italy and learn nothing from them. He probably did what most men do: that is, he assimilated what he learned so thoroughly that when he came to make use of it in his work it seemed a part of himself, and thanks were due to none. This is all very well only if one does not boast of the fact.

Stormy times were in store for the Venetian Republic to whose sway Padua was subject, and, as the two cities were only twenty-three miles apart, our scholars were forced to flee to more secure and peaceful portions of the peninsula. The League of Cambrai had just been formed against Venice, and by its provisions the Pope, the Emperor of Germany, the King of France, and the King of Spain had solemnly bound themselves together for the purpose of subduing and humiliating that haughty republic. So the young Archbishop, with his preceptors and the rest of his retinue, decided to go to the town of Siena, which was sufficiently removed from the seat of war to assure them of safety. Erasmus was loath to leave his beloved Padua and all the friends that he had made there, but the condition of things had become stern and threatening. We can sympathize with him when, writing to Aldus, he says: "Germain de Brie has kept me here with his fascinating company, just as I was ready for my departure. . . . Bad luck attend those fine gentlemen by whom I am hindered from enjoying this part of Italy which pleases me more every day." [13] So about the beginning of 1509 the party started for Siena by way of Ferrara and Bologna. As the distance to be traveled was about two hundred and twenty-five miles, we may safely assume that they journeyed slowly, stopping on the way at the various large towns through which they had to pass.

[12] *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

[13] Eras. Ep. 212, 213. (The author feels compelled to agree with Allen as against Nolhac in translating *bellis istis* as above, for otherwise it is scarcely conceivable that Erasmus would have made such an error as *per quos.*)

The first lengthy stay was made at Ferrara, where Erasmus again met his English friend Richard Pace, who received him into his house and entertained him there. He took pains to introduce him to all the learned men of that ancient city, among them being William Thale, to whom in 1521 Erasmus wrote a pleasant letter of invitation to visit him at Louvain, and in which he referred to the old days at Ferrara and wished that they might return once more. In another letter written to Celio Calcagnini in 1525, he inquires about other friends whom he had met at Pace's house, and particularly for Paniciato, Leoniceno, and Rhodiginus. Calcagnini replied that Leoniceno had recently passed away at an advanced age, having left behind him a reputation for medical, but more especially for Greek, learning which would win for him an eternal name. He also told him that Rhodiginus had bade farewell to the things of earth, since he had heard the news of the disastrous defeat of the French whose cause he had espoused, and that their king Francis I had been taken prisoner. Calcagnini was delighted that Erasmus had remembered a speech of welcome which he had made to him on the occasion of being introduced to him by Pace, a speech that Erasmus said was "so copious and so eloquent, that I was too dumb to reply." And Nolhac quotes from the same letter the following anecdote:

> The conversation having fallen on Aspendius the citharist, and there arising the question of what *intus canere* and *extra canere* meant, lo, you pulled out of a bag the *Adages,* which had just been published at Venice. I began from that time to admire you; and almost always, when your name happens to be mentioned among scholars, I remember that moment.[14]

Although Calcagnini was somewhat younger than Erasmus, there must have been strong bonds of sympathy between them, for they were strikingly similar in their tastes. Both hated war cordially and had written against it.[15] But the strongest bond of all was this, that they had both been made the butt of the world's ridicule, and through no fault of their own. They were of illegitimate birth, and had been compelled to bear the bar sinister. Besides the disgrace attendant thereon, there were penalties attached to this condition which were both unjust and humiliating. No man born out of wedlock was eligible for the simplest Church preferment, and it was expressly forbidden to them to hold ecclesiastical benefices. This was an insuperable obstacle to any legitimate ambitions that such unfortunate pariahs might otherwise entertain. So we see that, when Archbishop Warham so generously offered Erasmus the living at Aldington, he accepted it eagerly, but after he had it secured he requested the Archbishop to permit him to sell the benefice to a new incumbent, who would pay him an annual pension from its revenues. It would be most interesting to know whether or not Erasmus gave the prelate his real reason for this request, knowing as we do how sensitive he was on the subject of his birth; but we do know that Warham readily granted him the necessary permission.

We are much indebted to Nolhac for many interesting references to

[14] *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

[15] See Calcagnini, *De concordia.*

Erasmus which he has discovered among the letters of many of his friendly contemporaries; as, for instance, the passage from Ulric Hutten's letter to him, where he writes:

> Thence I went to Ferrara, where, when I spoke of you, immediately those accomplished scholars, Nicholas Leoniceno, Calcagnini, and a certain prince's secretary who was with you when you were crossing over from England, ran up to me, and you cannot imagine, dear Erasmus, how much they think of you. As for myself, they were wonderfully kind to me because I knew you and called you my preceptor. Besides these, Antimachos, the Professor of Greek, never mentions your name without doing you honor.[16]

The family of Este had been to Ferrara what the Medici had been to Florence, valiant in war, but, when the tranquillity of the times permitted, devoted heart and soul to the building up of the city. For many generations these hereditary Dukes of Ferrara, by their patronage of artists, poets, and painters, had lifted up Ferrara to an enviable position among her sister cities; and the grandeur of the ducal court was second to none in Italy. It was under the wise and munificent sway of Ercole I (1470-1504) that the city seemed to have attained its flowering season, and epic poetry, almost mute since the time of Dante, to have again found voice and expression. Here lived and flourished under the patronage of Duke Ercole, Boiardo who left to posterity his immortal *Orlando Innamorato,* Ariosto who continued the work under a different phase, giving us the equally immortal *Orlando Furioso,* and a host of other great men who as writers or artists made the city so famous throughout the world that it became a very Mecca for genius. On the death of Duke Ercole, his son Alfonso had succeeded to the dukedom, in which position he showed himself as wise and prudent as his illustrious father. Before coming to the throne he had traveled widely, visiting various countries, observing what was best in each, and bringing home the matured results for the betterment of his native patrimony. In accordance with the wishes of his father, and to strengthen further his territories against the encroachments of his neighbors, he had married Lucrezia Borgia, the daughter of the reigning Pope, Alexander VI. Whatever were the faults of her father, no historical authority nowadays contends that Lucrezia was the monster of iniquity that hostile political writers of her own age have represented her to be. Gregorovius, a Protestant historian, has shown in his biography of her that she was much like the women of her time, no better and no worse. She has suffered shockingly from hostile pens for being the daughter of her father and the sister of the notorious and unprincipled Caesar Borgia, a thing for which not she herself, but the accident of her birth and environment, were solely responsible. As Duchess of Ferrara she was in every way admirable, and deeply beloved and respected by her people. Her death was universally deplored, occurring as it did while she was still comparatively a young woman. Frizzi, a Ferrarese writer, says on this subject:

[16] *Op. cit.,* p. 60, n. 2.

> But the bitterest misfortune for Alfonso to bear was the death of his wife the Duchess Lucrezia, who succumbed to a miscarriage on the 24th of June, 1519, at the age of forty-one years, and was buried in the church of the Convent of Corpus Domini. She was equally beloved both by her husband and her subjects for her gracious manners and her piety, to which, having laid aside very early her worldly pomps, she had given herself up, as Paulus Jovius says. She spent her mornings in prayer. In the evenings she invited her gentlewomen in turn to share her work in embroidery, in which she was very skilful. She displayed above all a liberality to the poor, and to literary people, which is often one and the same thing.[17]

Though she is not closely connected with our subject, we have mentioned Lucrezia Borgia here for the reason that Gregorovius in his biography might have drawn another inference of her innocence from the fact that Erasmus said no word either in praise or dispraise of her. From what we have already seen of his disposition to censure Popes and princes, it is hardly likely that this famous woman would have escaped the arrows of his satire, had she been one-half of what history says she was. It may be replied that her piety was assumed and her charity an affectation. We cannot feel so when we learn that she was equally charitable to the Jews as to her own Catholic subjects, in which she certainly differed from Erasmus who cordially despised the Jews. As for the genuineness of her piety, we can measure that by the fact that when she lay on her dying bed she dispatched a messenger to Pope Leo X, begging his apostolic blessing in the hour of her agony and comporting herself in all ways like a pious and Christian woman.[18]

Ferrara must have been a delightful city for a stranger to visit in those times, and from all that Erasmus says about the place, and from the numerous acquaintances he made there, we cannot agree with Nolhac that he stayed there only five days. However this may be, the rest of the journey by way of Bologna, Florence, and Pistoia appears to have been made without any further delay, for he makes no mention of them at this time. The date of his party's arrival at Siena is not accurately known, but we may assume that it was about the beginning of 1509. His pupil, the young Archbishop of St. Andrew's, immediately resumed his interrupted studies at the University of Siena, and Erasmus again began to devote his spare time to his literary work.

Siena was at that time one of the most important cities of Italy, and like Venice, Florence, Ferrara, and Rome, was the abode of famous painters, sculptors, and other men of genius. In a literary way it had not produced any writers of the first class, but it had its University, and its scholarly and cultured circles. It was remarkably healthy on account of its hilly location, its sanitary and climatic conditions being of the best. It was far enough south to be secure from the disastrous consequences which the League of Cambrai threatened to inflict on Venice and her allies, and its settled policy in that affair was similar to that of Rome

[17] *Memorie della storia di Ferrara,* Vol. IV, p. 263.
[18] Gregorovius, *Lucretia Borgia,* p. 356. New York, 1903.

and Florence, its nearest neighbors. Hence it was admirably situated for the purposes of the young Archbishop, and so pleased was he with Siena that he made here a lengthened stay. Though very often turbulent, the populace of the city was kept in tolerable order by the strong hand of Pandolfo Petrucci, who ruled with despotic authority and manifested the sternness of his character in his every act. But the Sienese needed the strong hand, since they were surrounded with envious neighbors who coveted their territory and were unscrupulous in the methods they employed. Instead of the mailed fist, he condescended at times to cajole his volatile fellow-townsmen, but woe to the man who opposed him. He spared no one in his anger, and even his brother-in-law was put to death for daring to speak and act contrary to the wishes of the dictator. When his secretary was asked by Pope Alexander VI how Petrucci managed the difficult Sienese, he replied, "with lies, your Holiness."[19] It was the same method pursued by all those tyrannical rulers of Italy; and Machiavelli was not the originator of the method of government which passes as his. Petrucci was wont to say that "the laws were made and laid down by men, and that men had the right to break them," a privilege of which he frequently availed himself.[20] But history shows that turbulence has always invited despotism, and that under the circumstances of each individual case, despotism may have been not merely the only way, but even the best way available to bring peace out of chaos. So it is not strange that Siena flourished as never before under Petrucci's firm but despotic rule; and even Erasmus, who lived under this rule and hated tyranny, has nothing to say in dispraise of it.

After the literary atmosphere of Venice, Bologna, and Ferrara, Erasmus must have found Siena somewhat dull, for there were no literary stars of the first magnitude with whom he could associate there. This was all the better for the young Archbishop's interests, as it had been all the worse possibly for the young Boerios at Bologna. As a consequence, Erasmus devoted all his time to his duties with the young prelate; and in his *Adages* he gives us a passing glance of the life that they led together. In one of his adages, "Thou hast attained Sparta, do honor to it," while incidentally talking of the Archbishop, he permits us to know what branches he taught him and in what manner his instructions were conveyed. He was his tutor in Greek and Rhetoric, and by the latter broad term was meant in the Middle Ages the art of composition, written and spoken. This embraced the art of speaking in public with propriety, elegance, and force, emphasizing the power of persuasion and attraction in speech, expounding certain rules which should govern all prose composition or oratory designed to influence the judgments or the feelings of men, and treating of everything that related to the structure of periods, accuracy of expression, and figures of speech. No individuality was allowed, but every composition had to conform to the ancient classic type of *Inventio, Dispositio, Elocutio, Memoria,* and *Actio;* and the Ciceronian *Exordium* and *Peroratio* were indispensable. From the

[19] "Colle bugie."
[20] Pecci, *Memorie storico-critiche della città di Siena,* Vol. I, p. 237.

choice of subjects which he taught his pupil we may then assume that Greek and Rhetoric were his favorite topics. We know that the young man must have been an apt and responsive student, for Erasmus spoke of him in after times, and always with the greatest praise for his mental gifts and his assiduity in study: "He loved study so much that he even wished to learn during meals; while eating, he had them read to him the epistles of the Popes, or some of the works of St. Jerome or St. Augustine." [21]

Erasmus, who never allowed his pen to be idle, wrote for the imitation and edification of his pupil a series of declamations on various subjects, only one of which, a *Declamation on Death,* has come down to us.

But if Siena could boast of no great writers with whom Erasmus might associate, there were not lacking great painters, among whom may be mentioned Peruzzi (1481-1536), and Giannantonio Bazzi (1477-1549), who was much better known as Il Sodoma. The former has not left much of his work at Siena, since he early betook himself to Rome, where he collaborated with Raphael. But Il Sodoma may best be studied in his native town, where he left the bulk of his work. Not his best piece, yet perhaps the one which, from the nature of its subject, attracts most attention, is his picture of St. Catherine of Siena in one of her ecstasies. The verdict of the world of art, while admitting its many claims to be a great picture, is that it lacks sympathetic insight. It does not give us the slightest inkling of what Catherine of Siena really stood for in the lives of her contemporaries. She was a simple and obscure maiden, who early devoted her young life to the highest and noblest ideals to which human nature can aspire. She found her sphere of sanctification, not in segregation from her fellows, but in devotion to their service in every way. She visited the sick, comforted the dying, breathed the love of God into the hearts of hardened sinners, admonished the erring, reconciled enemies, and yearned for the conversion of the lost sheep of her native city. It is a fact that this simple maiden was consulted by Popes and princes, that city after city sought her advice in pressing exigencies, that legislation was based on her earnestly and eagerly besought decisions, and that war ceased and treaties of peace were made in accordance with her apparently inspired counsel. She had realized, as so very few have been able, the essential meaning of Christ's life on earth—that He had spent Himself for the uplifting and the betterment of suffering humanity; and as He had always sought to alleviate pain and distress wherever He met it—so her heart burned with a holy zeal to emulate the work of her beloved Savior. And when, worn out with the ever-increasing amount of misery which she could not reach, and discouraged at the hardness of men's hearts, she used to fear that her dear Master had lived in vain, she found comfort and consolation in her visions and ecstasies, during which she seemed to herself to be in closest and tenderest intimacy with her Lord. It is a pious belief among Catholics that she was a chosen instrument in the hands of God to accomplish many marvelous things. This may or may not be so, but who is so hardy as to set limits to the power of God? Parts of her body

[21] *Adages,* 1501, *ut supra.*

are enshrined in the church of San Domenico, in her beloved Siena. Let the psychologist enter in with reverent tread, but let the scoffer pass by. The city is redolent of her memory, and her fame is undying. It was so in Erasmus' day, and he must have visited San Domenico and gazed on Il Sodoma's painting of the saint, but the only mention that he ever made of Catherine was to cast a gibe at her in his celebrated letter to Grunnius. There is another picture of the saint in San Domenico, painted by her disciple Andrea Vanni, and hanging over the altar in the very chapel where her visions occurred. Had Erasmus seen this picture of her, drawn from memory by a loving hand, he might have carried away from Siena a higher and nobler idea of what Catherine had accomplished in her brief day.

But, as we have previously stated, Venice, Padua, and Ferrara, with their superior literary attractions, had spoiled him for dull Siena; and after a few weeks we find him obtaining leave from the young prelate to absent himself for a short period, so that he might visit the Eternal City, some one hundred and sixty miles away. This visit took place about the end of February, 1509, and we are to imagine Erasmus, mounted on the best horse that the stable of the young prince-prelate afforded, wending his way impatiently towards what had been for many years the goal of his ambitions—the imperial, classic, and hallowed city of Rome. Montepulciano may have won a passing glance from him, since it was the birthplace of Poliziano, for whom he had always expressed deep admiration. It is doubtful that he tarried long enough at Orvieto to view the wonderful sculptures on the façade of the cathedral of that town, which are perhaps the most delicate that can be found anywhere in Central Italy. Not sculpture nor painting nor any of the kindred arts at present engrossed his mind, but only men—the writers and thinkers of Rome who might admire his works and introduce him and them to the notice of the mighty, the opulent, and the discriminating personages of the Eternal City. So, too, it is improbable that he paused at Viterbo to drink from the mineral spring of Bulicame, famous even in Dante's day, be its waters ever so healing.[22] Dead Popes lay here entombed in the gloomy aisles of Viterbo's vast basilica, but we may feel assured that Erasmus had not the slightest desire to break the deep silence which surrounded them by any idle curiosity of his. Not the dead, who were neither to be feared nor propitiated, who could neither help nor hinder, could stay his course as he rode mile after mile ever Romeward. And at last, after probably five days in the saddle, the object of his desires came into view. We may imagine his crossing the Tiber at the historic Milvian bridge and entering on the last mile and a half of his journey along the dusty Flaminian Way, until he passed through the Porta Flaminia, flanked by its two towers of Aurelian, and so entered Rome. The lofty dome of St. Peter's, at sight of which your ancient *vetturino* exclaimed *"Ecco Roma,"* was not yet built, for Bramante, at the command of Pope Julius II, had only laid the foundation stone a scant three years since, and Michelangelo was not to put his marvelous hand to the gigantic task for many years to come.

[22] Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XIV, 76.

But the fame of his *Adages* had preceded Erasmus, and he felt secure of his welcome, since Scipio Carteromachos, his quondam friend of Bologna, was now in Rome ready to trumpet forth the praises of the new literary celebrity who was coming to the seat of the Christian world and the home of the Renaissance. To Carteromachos he had no doubt written previous to his arrival to secure for him necessary lodgings, and his mind was at ease on that score. Just at that moment, however, Carteromachos had little leisure to attend to his friend and to bestow on him the courtesies that the occasion demanded and which one learned man would naturally extend to another who was a stranger to his surroundings. His pupil Galeotto della Rovere had recently died, a youth of much promise, nephew of Pope Julius; but place was immediately made for Carteromachos in the suite of the Pope's favorite, Cardinal Alidosi, and with him he was compelled to depart almost at once, for the Pope had entrusted to that Cardinal the government of his turbulent city of Bologna, a mission which admitted of no delay. He reached Bologna on March 7, 1509.[23]

All of the biographers of Erasmus have tried to find in his writings some account of his feelings on first beholding Rome. Did he hasten to prostrate himself at the tomb of the Apostles? Did he seek to trace the footsteps of the early martyrs, and devoutly fall on his knees within the precincts sacred to their memory? His writings are mute on the subject. We find no laudatory allusions to the city's greatness, no note of admiration for her monuments of either pagan or Christian art. The past seems to have little attraction for him, but what does concern him is the men of the present and their splendid abilities along the lines of his own personal attainments. Two years afterwards another monk, footsore and weary because he had walked from Wittemberg in Saxony to Rome, entered the city by the same gate as Erasmus and, stopping before the convent attached to the church of Santa Maria del Populo, knocked at the door thereof and announced himself as Brother Martin, bearing a message from his Vicar-General, John Staupitz, to the General of the Order in Rome. And Rome was all unconscious of the fact that within her gates that day she harbored Martin Luther. Köstlin says that the devotion of a pilgrim inspired him as he arrived at the city which he had long regarded with holy veneration. When he came in sight of her, he fell upon the earth, raised his hands, and exclaimed, "Hail to thee, Holy Rome." She was truly sanctified, he declared afterwards, through the blessed martyrs and their blood which had flowed within her walls. And the next day, when he said Mass, he was filled

[23] We are following the chronology of Nolhac, but are free to confess that his dates in this instance do not commend themselves to us. If Erasmus reached Rome at the end of February and spent some days in the company of Carteromachos, how could the latter be in Bologna on March 7th? The distance to be covered was at the least estimate two hundred and eighty miles. Travel was by horse over roads that were poor and unsafe, and hence possible only in the daytime. A large retinue, such as the Cardinal would in those circumstances naturally have with him, would hardly travel more than forty miles daily, so that it is difficult to place Carteromachos in Rome at the end of February to meet Erasmus, to stay with him a few days, and yet to be at Bologna on March 7th. However, except for the matter of accuracy, it is not very important for us in this place.

with the ardor and exaltation of an Apostle Paul. What a difference in the coming of the two followers of St. Augustine—the one full of zeal and fervor for the work of the Master, the other equally zealous, but in how different a way!

And many years afterwards, when his less spiritual part had been acidified by anxiety and physical danger, Luther, indignant with himself, tells us "how he had run like a crazy saint on a pilgrimage through all the churches and catacombs and had believed what turned out to be a mass of rank lies and impostures." [24] And Erasmus' comment made likewise in after years was, "Rome? there is no Rome, except her ruins and rubbish, the scars and vestiges of her former disasters. Take away the Pope and the Cardinals, what then would be Rome?" [25] How inconsistent the greatest of men can become at times! Both Luther and Erasmus forgot that in spite of possible lies and imposture, in spite of the worldliness of Popes, Cardinals, and other ecclesiastics—and no doubt it existed—in spite of possible corruption attending the administration of the Church's vast temporal domain—and no contemporary court was free from it—in spite of the thousand and one things which might serve to dull the fervor of the devout and spiritually minded, yet withal, Rome was still Rome. Her catacombs were still the same catacombs where our Christian forefathers gathered to adore the Savior of mankind, her Coliseum still pointed aloft to remind them of her glorious past, her very soil that had drunk the blood of the martyrs was the same soil they were treading, and the spiritual part of Luther recognized the fact and made him fall upon his knees. It mattered not if at the same time her sacred precincts were the abode of the unworthy, if worldlings even desecrated her holy places; she was still that spot of the entire earth where organized Christianity had found its permanent home, where the deposit of truth which the Redeemer had promised to leave with us had been treasured sacredly; and if some claim that superstition has added to that deposit something more than they are prepared to accept, they readily admit that no slightest grain or atom of the original deposit is or ever has been lost, from the very earliest days down to the present. So Luther's impulse to salute the venerable city was a true one, and does him honor. How was it with Erasmus? His error was in considering that the Pope and the Cardinals were Rome, and that if they were taken away there would be no Rome left. He must have been aware that Clement V had been compelled to leave Rome and dwell in France, in obedience to the mandate of a haughty and ambitious king, Philip IV of that country, and that that Pope and six of his successors had dwelt there during sixty-eight years. He must also have been aware that, by gift and purchase, Avignon was just as much a part of the Papal States as Rome, and that the Papal Court was just as brilliant at Avignon as it had ever been at Rome, thronged as it was with the poets and scholars of all Europe. But there was only one, and could in the nature of things be only one, Rome, and when St. Catherine of Siena came to Avignon and implored the Pope to return to Rome we can easily acquit her of any worldly motive. She was only voicing the universal wish that the

[24] Köstlin, *Martin Luther,* p. 60. [25] LB, Vol. I, col. 1016F.

successor of Peter, of Linus, of Cletus, of Clement, and others of the illustrious line of Pontiffs, many of whom sealed their fidelity to their faith with their blood, should return to the spot hallowed by their sacrifice. If there were not a stone left upon a stone, Rome would still be Rome, the cradle of the early Church, the shrine, through the ages, of our Christian faith and our Christian traditions.

CHAPTER XX

ITALY: ROME: FIRST DISPENSATION

Fortified by the letters of introduction which we make no doubt were freely offered to him along his route from Padua to Rome, and remembering also the numerous friendships which he had already made with persons who were now resident in the Eternal City, Erasmus must have been at no loss to renew his relations with many friends. He realized his own worth as the author of at least one famous work, besides a number of others of more or less reputation. As a consequence he sought the acquaintance of his peers in scholarship and fame, and, in addition, he aimed to cultivate the esteem and good wishes of all those who occupied positions of influence, with a mind alert to possible advantages which might accrue to himself. This was very natural and very necessary to him in his always dubious financial condition. But he was now in Rome where the minutest details of Church polity were scanned, and where the decisions were made that were to influence and control the deeds of countless millions all over Europe. Honors were awarded here with a lavish hand to the fortunate ones of the Church, and censures were similarly passed on those who had been unfortunate enough to merit them. Here all sorts of dispensations might be petitioned for and obtained, if they commended themselves to the judgment of the heads of the various congregations whose duty it was to investigate the details of such matters; and we need have no doubt that swiftness and dispatch could be elicited in the adjudication of these petitions if influence were brought to bear in the proper quarters. In other words, affairs at the pontifical court were adjusted much as they were at any other European court, and the favors of the great were eagerly looked for and coveted. Under such circumstances, we may assume that Erasmus left no means untried to advance his interests and make for himself friends from whom he might ask favors when the opportunity offered. And there were many things of this nature which lay next his heart, which we shall have to enter into most minutely presently. Meanwhile we shall examine the friends whom he made.

One who could be of the utmost assistance to him was Egidius of Viterbo. He had probably met him at Bologna in the suite of Pope Julius, when the Pontiff was retaking the city from the Bentivogli about eighteen months previously. Here is a man whose career is interesting as showing that, oligarchic as the Church government is, it is in the broadest sense a real democracy, and that the most lowly may aspire to its highest offices. Egidius Antonini was born at Viterbo in 1472, of poor but respectable parents, and was thus about six years younger than

Erasmus. He had an excellent and lively mind, and like Erasmus entered a monastery school, where in 1489, at the age of seventeen, he made his profession as an Augustinian monk. He was sent by his superiors to study philosophy, theology, and the kindred studies, to which he added a profound knowledge of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldaic, Turkish, and Persian. But that which served most to attract attention to him was his gift of oratory, and it was to his pulpit eloquence that he owed his summons from Pope Alexander VI to come to Rome and reside there permanently. Pope Julius II recognized his lofty and distinguished qualifications, and appointed him first Vicar-General of his Order in Italy, and afterwards made him General of the Order throughout Christendom.[1] That Pope appreciated his qualities so highly that he never left Rome without carrying Egidius with him, and it was when he was a member of the Pope's household that Erasmus made his acquaintance at Bologna, probably at the instance of Carteromachos. Julius sent him as Nuncio to Venice, and later to the King of Naples, in order to incite these powers to collect their forces against the Turks, and after this he employed his good offices in reclaiming the city of Perugia from open rebellion to ready obedience to the Pope's control. At the death of Pope Julius, the new Pope Leo X immediately made use of him in 1515 to act as his Nuncio to the German Emperor Maximilian, in order to induce him to make peace with the Venetians. Then he sent him as his envoy to the Duke of Urbino, and on this occasion he wrote him three letters in which he entirely laid aside his pontifical dignity and spoke with him as one friend to another, displaying in this the high value which he placed in his judgment. Clement VII also esteemed him most highly and exhorted him to give to the world some of the many works which he had written. He was selected to preach the sermon at the opening of the Lateran Council in 1512, an effort which aroused the admiration of the learned Sadoleti who heard it, while Bembo, who read it, called him the most illustrious light of the age. He was not only a great orator, but in addition to this he was a poet, a historian, and a philosopher, and so great was his reputation as a theologian that Paul III, while yet a Cardinal, made him his confessor. He was made a Cardinal by Leo X in 1517, and Bishop of Viterbo and Patriarch of Constantinople, by Clement VII in 1524. In the sack of Rome he lost his priceless library, a loss which was worse to him than any monetary loss would have been. It depressed him very much, and shortly afterwards he retired to Padua, where he spent his declining years in correspondence with the learned, among whom were Bembo, Sadoleti, and other leading literary men of that time. He died in 1532, aged sixty years, and was buried in the church of St. Agostino in Rome. His motto, which was placed in his titular church of St. Matthew after his death, was "Non quid sed qua mente operemur," not a bad motto for any man.[2]

[1] Though he was the General of the Augustinian Order, he had no relation with the Canons Regular.

[2] Lorenzo Cardella, *Memorie storiche dei cardinali della Santa Romana Chiesa*, 10 vols. Rome, 1792-97.

Another of Erasmus' Roman friends of this time was Filippo Beroaldo, called the younger, to distinguish him from his equally celebrated uncle of the same name. He was born in Bologna in 1470, and was thus about four years younger than Erasmus. Like a great many of the scholars of those days, he seems to have made marvelous progress in the languages, so much so that, when he was barely twenty-six years old, he was made Professor of Polite Literature in the University of Bologna. But Rome attracted him so strongly that he shortly made it his home, where he had the good fortune to win the post of private secretary to Cardinal de'Medici, who was afterwards Leo X. By this Pontiff he was made Principal of the Roman Academy, and later librarian of the Vatican, and to him Leo entrusted the editing of the celebrated edition of Tacitus which bears his name. He was a fine Latin poet and historical writer, and Bembo, in the epitaph which he wrote in honor of his friend, tells us that Pope Leo shed real tears on the death of this brilliant scholar. Beroaldo died in 1518. We must not forget Inghirami, who preceded him as librarian of the Vatican. This in many ways remarkable scholar was born in the same year as Beroaldo, and made his studies under the immediate protection of Lorenzo de'Medici. He too came to Rome, and enjoyed the patronage of Alexander VI, who made him a canon of St. Peter's and gave him the rank of a prelate. In 1495, when only twenty-five years old, he was sent as papal Nuncio to the Emperor Maximilian, a mission which he executed to the mutual satisfaction of the Pope and the Emperor. Indeed, the Emperor was so pleased with him that after his departure to Rome, he sent him an imperial diploma creating him Count Palatine and Poet Laureate, with an Austrian blazon for his family arms. He was appreciated just as much by Julius II as by Alexander VI, for besides appointing him librarian of the Vatican Julius made him pontifical secretary, and afterwards secretary to the College of Cardinals. When Leo X ascended the papal throne he continued to pour honors and emoluments on him, until an unfortunate accident on the streets of Rome in which he met his death removed him from any further earthly honors. He was better known by the name of Phaedrus, from a circumstance of his youth which gives us a singular instance of his talents and his quickness of decision. It appears that with some of his learned associates he was engaged in giving a rendition of Seneca's *Hippolytus* for the benefit of Cardinal Riario and other high ecclesiastics, the rôle of Phaedra being allotted to him. An accident behind the scenes stopped the performance and created an awkward pause, whereupon Inghirami, stepping to the front, held the attention of the audience singly by reciting extemporaneous Latin verse, until at length the trouble was adjusted. Hence his name of Phædrus, which he afterwards retained and used as his signature.[3] Erasmus said of him that "he knew and loved him as a man really more famous for his conversation than for his writings, . . . being called the Cicero of his age."[4]

An equally celebrated lover of the fine arts at that time in Rome was Angelo Colocci. He was about the same age as Erasmus, but much

[3] See Toscano's *Elogia*, quoted by Roscoe in his *Life of Leo X*, Vol. IV, p. 203.
[4] Eras. Ep. 1347, ll. 264, 270.

more fortunate in his birth and environment. He was born at Iési in the Marches of Ancona in 1467, and was sent to Rome where he studied Greek, Latin, Italian, and the Provençal languages. After some political vicissitudes which resulted in his family's being exiled to Naples, he was recalled by the people of his native town and sent to Rome on an embassy to Alexander VI. As a result he remained permanently at Rome and, being brilliant and rich, he soon held important positions in the Eternal City. He owned a magnificent mansion surrounded by superb gardens, and a library of the rarest books and manuscripts, all of which he generously threw open for the delectation of his literary friends. Here, too, he established the Roman Academy, which had been homeless and scattered since the death of Pomponius Laetus. Although he had been twice married, at the death of his second wife he took orders on being appointed by Pope Leo X to be his secretary, and was afterwards made the future Bishop of Nocera. Other honors also came his way, and all went well with him until the sack of Rome by Charles of Bourbon in 1527, when he lost his beautiful home with its library and all its treasures of learning and art, and was almost deprived of his liberty. He died in Rome, May 11, 1549. Although he wrote considerable, he seems to have been rather a patron of learning than an earnest disciple. It would seem that Erasmus and Colocci were antipathetic, for there was no firm friendship established between them. In fact, a decided hostility was evident in their comments on each other in after years, which need not cause us any wonder when we realize that they were both equally satiric and would rather sacrifice a friend than a witticism any day. They repelled each other as similar poles repel, being absolutely devoid of the slightest mutual attraction. Erasmus probably never forgave the slight contained in the following satirical lines which Colocci addressed to Leo X on the death of Inghirami, who was noted for his corpulence; and he readily surmised that the *deunce* expressed the extent of Colocci's regard for him personally:

Hesterna, Leo, luce cum perisset
Orator grauis, et grauis Pœta,
Hæredem sibi fecit ex deunce
Erasmum, Beroaldum ex triente,
Ex semisse Iuuencium; Camillo
Nepoti reliquum reliquit assis.
Is vero tumulum repleuit vnus
Posteros monumenta ne sequantur.[5]

This was written in 1516, long after Erasmus had left Rome, but it rankled in his mind permanently; and it was in an endeavor, no doubt, to belittle the literary reputation of Colocci that he told Haio Hermann of never having heard the name Colocci before.[6] But we, being better informed in the matter than Haio Hermann, know that this was not so, that Erasmus was disingenuous in the affair, and that he had strained the truth to the breaking point in order to launch his arrow against Colocci. Knowing also as we do that Colocci was the very intimate friend of Erasmus' two dearest Italian friends, Carteromachos and Bombace,

[5] *Opera Latina*, p. 56.

[6] Eras. Ep. 1479, l. 28

we realize that it would have been impossible for his name never to have been mentioned in Erasmus' presence. But we need not argue the question further, for we have the express statement of Carteromachos that they not only were known to each other, but had even met personally.[7]

There was an intimacy between Erasmus and Julio Camillo, even to the extent of their sharing each other's bed. Camillo was a Latin poet of much reputation and had taught logic at the University of Bologna. He was surnamed Delminio, from the name of a town in Dalmatia whence his family originally sprang, but he himself was born in Friuli, in northern Italy, about 1478. He spent many years in France, where he gathered a merited repute for learning.

We must not omit from the list of the acquaintances whom Erasmus met on this visit to Rome one of the most important of all, namely, Jacopo Sadoleti. This eminent man was born at Modena in 1477, and was hence eleven years the junior of Erasmus. Like all the other Italian scholars already mentioned, he enjoyed the benefits of a sound classical education, being a pupil of Leoniceno, while Carteromachos himself had taught him Greek. Beroaldo was said to have been jealous of Sadoleti's attentions to the famous Roman courtesan Imperia, and whether the report was true or false, perpetuated the memory of the affair in some verses of his. This has lent an air of looseness of character to Sadoleti's youth, which, if we can judge by his after life, was totally undeserved. He was a member of the Roman Academy and was appointed by Leo X to be one of his secretaries, and afterwards made Bishop of Carpentras in 1517. All his contemporaries testify to his piety and zeal in performing the duties of his episcopal office, and state that it was always with the greatest reluctance that he left his diocese to return to the distractions of the Eternal City. In the sack of Rome, in which so many priceless treasures perished, he vigorously exerted himself to save his valuable library. When the invasion of Charles of Bourbon was impending, he secured a vessel and, loading it with all his treasured tomes, dispatched it to his diocese, but the plague having broken out aboard, the vessel was refused a landing in any port. The vessel was never heard of afterwards, and so the library perished. After a useful and honorable life, he died at Rome on October 18, 1547.

We may plainly see from the accounts of the Italian scholars already given that, though there were centres of learning which gathered around almost every Italian university, yet Rome was the greatest of them all, the papal court seeming to draw them to itself as the sun attracts the lesser luminaries. Naples and Florence and Venice and Bologna and Ferrara had disputed her eminence for the past hundred years, but with the pontificate of Julius II she so far surpassed them that they ceased to vie with her for supremacy. But it was really in the pontificate of Julius' successor, Leo X, that Rome's proud preëminence in learning of every sort was so manifested to the world that the Renaissance was ever after held to have culminated then and there; and whether we

[7] On March 28, 1509, Carteromachos writes to Colocci: "Yesterday I wrote to you by Erasmus the author of the *Adages*."

contemplate painting, sculpture, astronomy, philosophy, literature, or the more recondite fine arts, every eye was turned to Rome as the source and centre of all that was famous, the abode of the greatest scholars, the shrine of the most glorious examples of human skill, and the seat of the world's treasures of universal learning. It was just at the opening of this most glorious epoch that Erasmus had timed his visit to Rome. Bramante was even now at work on the new Basilica of St. Peter's, Michelangelo was beautifying the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel with his immortal frescoes, and Raphael was adorning the Stanze of the Vatican. What an inspiring age! Let us try to trace Erasmus' thoughts, his feelings, his opinions, and his aspirations, in the environment which now surrounded him. That he thoroughly enjoyed Rome and its treasures is made manifest to us in many of his letters. Writing to Robert de Guibé, a Cardinal, in 1515, he thus expresses his delight in the Eternal City:

> Most reverend father. I have wished by this letter of mine to testify to you this one thing only, that I have never been, nor ever will be, forgetful of the kindness which your Eminence bestowed on me, a man not at all entitled to it, both on my journey, and while I was living in Rome. To forget that city I should need another Lethean stream, so that I might suffer no more from my longing therefor. For I cannot refrain from regret as often as there come into my mind that sky, that Campagna, those libraries, those walks, those delightful conversations with learned men, and I remember how many lights of the world, what a fortune, and what expectations I so easily left behind me there.[8]

Other strangers might come to Rome and see only the outside of it, but Erasmus was taken by his friends into the very *penetralia* of the Roman Curia, and all its grandeur, its brilliance, its power, its loftiness, and even its pettiness, were laid bare to his scrutinizing and not too friendly eye; during his entire sojourn in the Eternal City the innermost secrets of the papal court and the personal characteristics of the governing officials, from the Pope down to the obscurest secretary, were exposed to his retentive and satiric mind.

It is still an open question among his biographers whether or not Erasmus could form an unbiased opinion of what he saw in the papal court, and so give us in his writings a fair interpretation of the motives of the men whom he saw there. Of their learning and ability no one could give a better account, but of what lay beneath all this—their character for probity, sincerity, and religious zeal—it is very doubtful that he could approach such things with an impartial mental attitude. And we shall show presently that the reason for this lay in himself and was due to his birth and his early struggles against a most unfortunate environment. We shall quote on this matter Nolhac, who seems to have penetrated quite deeply into the character and motives of Erasmus:

[8] Eras. Ep. 253.

Notwithstanding the extreme openness of his mind, Erasmus was perhaps not in a position to be perfectly equitable in his judgments about Rome. Many details that we admire to-day in the Italian Renaissance, and even at the court of Julius II or of Leo X, might have shocked his Dutch simplicity. The unapostolic pomp of the prelates caused him to misunderstand the artistic and social progress which were the result of that dazzling life, of that display of culture and wealth. Having seen them from a point too close at hand, he has painted all those whom he deemed the parasites of the Curia, "all those scribes, copyists, notaries, lawyers, secretaries, stirrup holders, grooms, bankers, lobbyists, that crowd of men in charge of and at the charge of the court of Rome." There is in this enumeration more of malice than of indignation, but it is certain that Erasmus places himself at the viewpoint of a gospel ideal which was not in the mind of any Italian of that time. As for the hunting after benefices, and the freedom of manners of a great part of the Roman clergy, it is with good right that Erasmus showed himself scandalized thereat; and although he later regretted his satires when he saw the use the Protestants made of them against his own cause, they have for us all the value of sincere documents and of spontaneous testimonies.

With regard to the corruption and the abuses which so acutely impressed the mind of Luther the year following, it is of importance to place here the more consoling spectacles which escaped the superficial observation of that Augustinian monk. Besides some priests who were bad, Erasmus made the acquaintance of true ministers of Christ, prelates who were zealous, learned, and pious, worthy of their priesthood and of their rank. Not all the humanists whom he met played the part of pagans. If Beroaldo's verses to *la bella Imperia* shocked his scruples, Egidius of Viterbo and others must have edified him by their virtues. Amongst the highest dignitaries of the Church he found some who were in complete sympathy with him. He had very quickly been introduced into the Sacred College and received with esteem by divers Cardinals, of whom several remained his correspondents. Let us cite in the number of those whom he styles his Maecenases, Robert de Guibé, Bishop of Nantes in residence at Rome, and Giovanni Stefano Ferrerio, Bishop of Bologna. Cardinal John de'Medici also took pleasure in meeting Erasmus, and received him many times in his own home; and a few years afterwards, when he had become Leo X, he delighted in recalling the memory of their little chats. He did more than this, for he did not hesitate to close the mouths of the calumniators of Erasmus, and encouraged his labors in exegesis as an honor to the Church.[9]

Emerton, too, is undoubtedly right in his surmise that Erasmus' attitude towards the Church had long since been fixed, and that what he saw on his Italian visit only served to strengthen that attitude. Now

[9] *Op. cit.*, pp. 78-81.

we are presently to adduce the reason why Erasmus had early in life assumed such a position and continued to maintain it almost to the end. He had more than the usual share of human weaknesses to combat all his days, and often the struggle was too much for him, at which moments he displayed aspects of his character which dismay us and which we find hard to reconcile with our ideas of what a great mind should be. For instance, he was always discontented and uneasy at the excellence or good fortune of others, as if his own were diminished thereby; and the knowledge that he was forever doomed to labor under handicaps which were due to no fault of his own, but which hampered his worldly advancement, served at times to render him envious, spiteful, and even malicious. If such pettinesses could ever be justified, then certainly no living man ever had better reasons for such justification; and the more deeply we probe into the history of his unhappy youth, the more gently are we disposed to judge of his harsh and censorious comments on the lives and acts of those who had been more fortunate than he. Let us recall his youth for a moment. Beginning with his birth, he was illegitimate, coming into the world with that dread title *bastard,* henceforth and always to be pointed out and sneered at even by the very children in the street as a pariah, a nobody, a nameless outcast, an innocent partner in his mother's disgrace. The people of the Germanic race, which includes the Dutch, were always terribly severe in their treatment of this class of unfortunates.[10] Not the slightest provision was made to render their miserable lot more bearable; and we can judge of the contempt in which they were held by the epithets applied to them; viz., *Sidekinder, Bankert, Hurensohn, Chebskinder, Skelkinder, Wänburtige, Ledige Kinder, Unfallskinder, Kolzensohn,* etc. They were excluded from giving testimony in courts of law and were debarred from becoming judges or counselors. They did not have the right to make a will or to leave any property to their heirs beyond the sum of sixty silver pennies, all in excess of this going to the lord of the manor on whose domain they dwelt. They were considered as slaves, and having no standing before the law, they could not be brought into court. If one of them were killed in a quarrel, consequently, his relatives had no redress before the law, and the lord of the manor settled the matter according to his own free and unquestioned wishes. Furthermore, these outcasts were generally excluded from all political rights and could not purge themselves from an accusation by an oath, nor have resort to single combat, as was often the custom in those days. They had no right to *weregild*[11] and were not allowed to hold fiefs. The dishonor attached to illegitimate birth was as well impressed on these unfortunates in Holland as in Germany. The town charter of Monnikindam forbade bastards to give testimony in law courts against anyone; and a Dutch charter of 1417 promised the inhabitants of another

[10] See Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis,* Vol. I, p. 596, §1.
[11] A compensation paid for a man killed, partly to the king for the loss of a subject, partly to the lord of the vassal, and partly to the next of kin. It was paid by the murderer. *Blackstone.*

town that "they shall never have a bailiff who is not an honest man, or is a bastard."

It was only from the beginning of the sixteenth century that this lamentable position of bastards and the dishonor attached to illegitimate birth began at all to diminish in that part of Europe. What a contrast between the intolerance of the Germanic races on this subject and the gentle words of the Roman jurist Papinianus uttered fourteen centuries before, that "the feelings of him who has done no harm should not be embarrassed"! This Papinianus, who lived about one hundred and fifty years after Christ, may or may not have been a Christian, but he certainly displays in this more of the Master's spirit than the Germanic jurists seem to have manifested thirteen centuries later. It may have been due to his writings that the peoples of the south of Europe who followed the Roman law in their courts seem to have regarded the bastard with a less stern eye. Now let us see how the Church regarded this subject. To bastards who became priests it was allowed to make a will, like other Christians; but if they died intestate their personal property belonged to their bishop, while their real estate fell to the lord of the manor. As a matter of fact, they were excluded from Holy Orders, but if, on account of some special circumstance in individual cases, they were advanced to the sacerdotal dignity by dispensation from their bishops or the Pope, they were yet bound by the same harsh rules with regard to the disposition of their own property. Moreover, they could not receive promotion in the Church, nor enjoy a benefice or even a canonry without a special dispensation from Rome. In some churches, notably in the Cathedral of Amiens, it was especially decreed that no priest who had been born a bastard could ever hold a canonry. This tendency to mark with a stigma the issue of illicit unions seems to be instinctive in most peoples, and is probably an unconscious attempt to preserve and defend the human family and to maintain the moral order. Nevertheless, it is excessively cruel to punish the innocent child for a fault not its own.

Now let us see how all this ignominy and opprobrium affected Erasmus. In the first place he was not only a bastard, but he was the son of a priest, which was the most heinous sort of bastardy, because the scandal was more widely known and the child could never be legitimatized. It matters not for our present purpose whether the father of Erasmus was in orders before or after his son's birth, since the consequences were the same to the child in either case. We may safely assume that, when he went to school at the tender age of five, the village schoolmaster Peter Winckel had to frown down attempts of the unruly ones of his flock to make the new pupil miserable on the score of his birth, and if he were a man with kindly feelings it is quite possible that he may have been forced to have recourse to the magisterial birch on occasions when the reviling became too strong. Referring to those early days, Erasmus says that he did not make much progress in his studies and called them unpleasant. It is within the bounds of possibility that it was not the studies so much as the concomitants that were unpleasant to him. After four years of this, he

was mercifully sent to school at Deventer, where he was among strangers. He had been thrown in upon himself during this time of trial, and so his mind became his kingdom from that time to the day of his death. Hence it was that no sooner had he become properly settled at the school in Deventer than he began to excel all his fellows, and eventually won the praise of Sintheim and Rudolph Agricola.[12]

If "the child is father to the man," then Erasmus must have been secretive, reserved, irritable, quick to resent imaginary or real slights, suspicious, hungering for sympathy and friendship but too proud to make the first advances, internally burning with envy of his more fortunate companions, and externally haughty with pride in his superior mental ability. And comparing their good fortune in having happy homes and fond parents to visit and cherish them with his loneliness and desolation, in pure bitterness of spirit he resolved to excel not only them but the whole world, and to make a name for himself which the world would be compelled at least to honor and respect. Add to all this a rather sickly boyhood, and we have a combination of the most discouraging circumstances that any boy ever had to contend against; and it is not surprising if the more generous impulses of his soul were repressed and in the course of time atrophied. His sickness lasted over a considerable period and, though it was called by Erasmus an intermittent fever, its real nature was probably some form of pyelitis, as we surmise, following the pest, as the prevailing influenza was at that time called. So we have the boy with his sickly body and a mind filled with resentment and envy, helpless to protect himself from insult, and envious of all who were more happily placed than he. He was indeed an Ishmael, for "his hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him." And never was this truer than when he had entered the monastery of Steyn and taken his irrevocable vows. He had made an unfortunate choice in the monastery where he had finally decided to make his religious profession; for unlike Deventer and Hertzogenbusch, where he was a comparative stranger and where the stigma on his birth could only be disclosed by accident, at Steyn he was only a short distance from Gouda, where his people had lived, and where he was brought up until he was five years old. With his disposition as already delineated, with his suspicious nature and his tendency to take offense where none may have been intended, with his pride of intellect which may have led him to show his fellow-monks how far beneath him they were in mental attainments, and thus in some measure pay them back for slights and innuendos imagined or real, with his total lack of a vocation, in the religious meaning of that term, and the consequent absence of all spiritual uplift to enable him to bear the difficulties of his state with any sort of equanimity, with

[12] Sintheim addressed him on one occasion in the following words: "Macte ingenio, Erasme; tu ad summum eruditionis fastigium olim peruenies." Agricola, visiting the school some years later, examined the work of Erasmus, and was so struck with its general excellence that he caressed him, and predicted that if he continued he would be a great man some day. Praise from this celebrated scholar must have moved Erasmus deeply, for he took many occasions in after life to praise the memory of this great and kindly man.

an insuperable repugnance towards the spirit of discipline which was and is a necessary adjunct of monastic life, and in a word, with a soul in rebellion against the environment in which he found himself and which he was unable to change or even modify, we may readily conceive and easily understand why he came at last to entertain an intense and undying hatred against the entire system of monastic institutions.

Le Clerc tells of an incident which happened about this period of his convent life, which we shall give in his own words:

> There was a pear tree in the garden at Steyn which bore pears that the Superior liked very much, and which he desired to keep for himself. Erasmus, who in this matter had the same tastes as the Superior, got up very early several days running to rob the pear tree without the fact becoming known. This compelled the Superior, who perceived that his pears were diminishing, to keep watch himself one morning at the window of his cell in order to discover the thief. . . . We must state that there was a brother in the monastery who was lame. So one morning while the Superior was on the watch, he perceived a monk up in the pear tree picking his pears. As it was not yet daybreak, he decided to wait a little while without saying anything, in order to recognize this monk; but he made some noise that Erasmus heard, so that from fear of being discovered, he quickly descended the tree, and made off to the monastery limping. The Superior, who believed that he had surely recognized the thief, thought it would be better to await the daylight in silence, and censure him before the whole community. After he had assembled the monks, and after having said a lot of nice things upon holy obedience, he turned towards the lame brother and accused him of having violated said virtue in a most outrageous manner, by stealing the pears in the garden contrary to his reiterated commands. The poor brother vainly tried to prove his innocence, which only augmented the anger of the Superior, who felt sure that he had recognized him by a mark so evident, so that he imposed a heavy penance on him in spite of all his protestations.[13]

This rather amusing story, which may or may not be true, is thoroughly Erasmian, and quite in keeping with his character, as we have already shown. He had no tenderness of conscience, nor was he of a generous disposition; and if the poor crippled brother had to suffer in his stead, it was unfortunate but unavoidable.

How then could such a youth as Erasmus find happiness within the walls of a monastery, where the very atmosphere breathes of self-sacrifice and self-immolation, or, at least, should do so, if all therein live up to the dictates of the true monastic spirit? According to his own confession, his reputation for chastity was not spotless even when he was a monk at Steyn;[14] and we have already seen how William Herman reprehended him for his loose manner of living while at Paris.

[13] *Bibliothèque universelle,* Vol. VII, pp. 140-1. [14] Eras. Ep. 296.

If we may judge of his utter unfitness for a monastic life by the letters which he wrote to Servatius, a fellow-monk, the mere fact that he dared to write such letters within the walls of the monastery showed a hardihood which is eloquent of his total disregard for his vows, of his attitude towards his Superior, of his contempt for all authority, and of his entire lack of any deep religious feeling at that time. So we may conclude that his mind was in a state of anarchy, where any change from the austere, ascetic, and monotonous life of the monastery would be welcomed with delight. And we may imagine that it was in these hours of bitter and frenzied unrest that wild dreams of destroying monasticism, of shattering the fabric of ecclesiasticism and everything connected with it first entered his mind, to be dwelt on as a pleasing though impossible eventuality, but later to be entertained as a far from impossible reality. Somewhere Goethe says, "When a great man has a dark corner in him, it is terribly dark." This was Erasmus' dark corner.

But suddenly, like a benison from heaven, came the message from the Bishop of Cambrai, appointing him to be his Latin secretary, and lo, the hated thraldom of his monastery was dissolved for him, at least for the present. And we do not think we are assuming too much if we assert that when Erasmus heard the great door of Steyn close behind him he then and there resolved never more to enter it again, if by any possible human means he could prevent it. For this end must he labor night and day, for this end must he drink in learning, for this end must he become so great a scholar that the world will demand his bodily presence in its midst, and that henceforth he shall be pent up in the walls of no monastery on earth. Here was a herculean task indeed, for a youth bearing the bar sinister and without friends.

But he kept his secret locked up in his own breast and made no man his confidant; and as he passed from the monastery to the Bishop's palace, from the palace to the College of Montaigu, thence to England, and at length to the papal court of Rome, he noted the failings and weaknesses of Popes, bishops, priests, and monks, and studied them as one would a collection of exotic plants. To use the meek and humble life of Our Savior as a measuring stick with which to compare the lives of the representatives to whom He had entrusted the guidance of His Church, to point out their pride and vainglory, and to show forth to the world their sinfulness and defects, to accuse his fellow-monks of ignorance and gluttony, of drunkenness and vice, this became to him an obsession which possessed him utterly and completely. And remembering the saying that "once a monk always a monk," he lived in daily fear that at any moment he might be compelled by force of circumstances to return to Steyn, which would be to him a misery unutterable. So he devoted himself to his dream of so weakening the props that upheld the monastic institution that some day it would fall and he would be free from its accursed thraldom forever. But he was a cautious and calculating Samson, and had not the slightest intention of being buried in the ruins, so he took counsel with himself how best to proceed in this mighty undertaking. And the engine of destruction

upon which he finally decided was ridicule, and its first fruits was the *Praise of Folly*.

But before we proceed to analyze this famous book, which we intend to do at some length, we must return to where we left him at Rome, busily engaged in jotting down the materials for it. From what we have just set down above as the result of the combined opinions of both his enemies and his friends, we are now more inclined to agree with Nolhac that Erasmus was not in a position to be "perfectly equitable in his judgments about Rome," and also to agree with Emerton that "There is no indication that this visit to Rome had any decisive influence upon Erasmus' attitude towards the Church. That was already determined . . . Rome could hardly fail to furnish him with new suggestions and illustrations, but it was far from forcing him into any new attitude of opposition," etc.[15] And yet Rome treated him with the greatest kindness, as he himself tells us in many of his letters. For instance, in his letter to Augustinus Steuchus he gives us an account of the hearty welcome he received at the hands of Cardinal Grimani during this visit. Since De Burigni has succeeded in compressing this rather long letter into succinct form, we will make use of his résumé instead of translating the whole of it.

> Peter Bembo, a noble Venetian who afterwards was one of the ornaments of the Sacred College, had been charged many times by Cardinal Grimani to invite Erasmus to pay him a visit; but the latter, who little loved the society of the great, only went after many pressing requests, and rather because he was ashamed so often to refuse the advances of such a great man, than from inclination. He found no one in the courtyard, as it was after dinner, so he gave his horse to his valet, and ascended to the antechambers. In the first three there was no sign of a servant, and all the doors were wide open, which caused him much astonishment at seeing such a vast solitude. Still continuing to advance, he met a Greek who was guarding a door and asked him what the Cardinal was doing. This Greek, whom Erasmus had taken for a physician, replied that his master was in conversation with some distinguished guests, and asked him what he desired. "I would have liked to pay my respects to the Cardinal," said he, "but since he is engaged, I will return some other time." At the same time he pursued his way to the door, taking in the lovely view through the open windows. The Greek returned again to know if he wished to send in a message to the Cardinal. "It is not worth while to disturb him," said Erasmus, "I will come again soon." The Greek asked him his name, which he consented to give him, and he had no sooner heard it than he ran to the apartment of the Cardinal without Erasmus perceiving the fact, and reappeared just as quickly, begging him not to go away, and in a moment he was admitted to the Cardinal's chamber. He was received just as if he himself were a Cardinal; the prelate had a

[15] *Desiderius Erasmus*, p. 151.

chair brought for him, and they had a conversation of more than two hours duration, during which the Cardinal would not permit him to remove his hat. Literature was the subject of their chat. The Cardinal urged him to stay in Rome, where people of merit were sure to find favor. At the same time he offered him the use of his house, and even to share with him his fortune, adding that the climate of Rome would agree with his constitution, and that the palace in which he dwelt had been built by a Pope who had preferred this location as being in the healthiest quarter of Rome. After they had chatted for a long time, the Cardinal sent for his nephew, who, though a young man, was already an archbishop. On his entrance Erasmus was about to rise, but the Cardinal would not have it so, saying that it was the pupil who ought to stand before the master. He then showed him over his library, consisting of the best books written in all sorts of languages. The conversation ended with assurances on the Cardinal's part that the offers which he had made him were not simple compliments. He begged him not to judge him by the ordinary people of the court, who make many promises but have no regard for them; and he made him promise not to leave Rome without making him another visit. But he did not keep his word, because he had already resolved to return to England, where they held out hopes to him of a brilliant fortune, and he feared lest he might not have sufficient resolution to resist the eloquence and the kind offers of the Cardinal, who earnestly desired to keep him in Rome. He very much regretted afterwards that he had not accepted the Cardinal's proposals. The Grimani library was, after that of the Pope, the most considerable that was in Rome at that time, and consisted of eight thousand volumes. The Cardinal was himself very learned, and had translated into Italian St. Chrysostom's *Treatise on the Incomprehensible Nature of God.*[16]

Some of the other Cardinals treated him with the same affection, notably the Pope's nephew, Cardinal Raphael of St. George; and many of the letters of his later life are full of allusions to the terms of intimacy that existed between himself and the higher ecclesiastical dignitaries of the Roman court. Yet while he was enjoying their hospitality he was meditating against them a work of the most caustic severity of remark, the most cutting irony, the most trenchant wit, the most sarcastic reprobation, the most biting rebuke, and the most corrosive invective that any man at any time had ever had the hardihood to conceive and publish. But of that anon.

Meanwhile the Archbishop his pupil was awaiting him at Siena. Beatus Rhenanus, who wrote his memories of Erasmus for the Emperor Charles V in 1540, says that Erasmus went back to Siena but returned to Rome almost immediately, bringing with him the young Archbishop. Now we have no desire to question the accuracy of the good Beatus, but memories are elusive, and in any case he may not

[16] *Vie d'Érasme,* Vol. I, p. 140.

have grasped the sequence of events just as they were related to him by Erasmus. Judging by the length of time that it took in those days to make the journey from Siena to Rome, and taking into account the stay that Erasmus made in the latter city, it seems hardly possible that he would have had the time to return to Siena, and yet be back again in Rome for Good Friday, which in that year occured on April 6th. It seems more probable that Erasmus had simply preceded the Archbishop to Rome in order to secure suitable accommodations for him, and that the young prelate followed after at his leisure when he had heard from his preceptor that all was in readiness for him. But the point is absolutely of no importance, so we pass on to speak of the Archbishop's affairs, since they were in train to bring about a separation between Erasmus and his pupil. Pope Julius, having humbled the pride of the Venetians, and having wrested from them those parts of the Romagna to which he laid claim as belonging to the papal territory, was now disposed to treat them with more gentleness, particularly as Louis XII of France, the Emperor Maximilian, and Ferdinand of Spain, who had been his allies in that undertaking, were now to be prevented from obtaining too great a share of the spoils in payment for their assistance. The sagacious Pontiff did not desire that in curbing the Venetians he should bring about the subjection of the major part of Italy to foreign dominations. Looking abroad, he observed that, while he had recovered the Romagna, Naples was held by Ferdinand, Milan and a great part of Lombardy by Louis, while the Emperor had taken possession of the northeastern section of the Venetian territory. But while he saw that Ferdinand and the Emperor were contented with their share, he perceived in Louis signs of fresh ambitions and efforts to obtain possession of Florence and the neighboring territories. Hence he decided to check the designs of the French king, and set about it in this way. He secured the ready aid of the Venetians, obtained the neutrality of the always impecunious Emperor by paying him a large sum of money, and then by other cogent and convincing reasons induced Ferdinand to join him in expelling the French from Italy. He sent Henry VIII of England the Golden Rose and urged him most earnestly to make an attack on the French.[17]

Now Scotland was at this time in alliance with France, and consequently the young Archbishop, the son of the Scottish monarch, might be in some personal danger, if the presence of this presumptive enemy of the Pope became noised about in Rome. So it was determined between Erasmus and himself that his identity should be concealed on this visit. Although he had been already summoned home by his father, he felt that he ought not to leave Italy without seeing the Eternal City, with Erasmus as his *cicerone*. The latter also records that they extended their trip as far as Naples and visited the celebrated Cave of the Sibyl at Cumae. If we remember rightly, this mythical lady is said to have offered King Tarquin the Proud nine books full of oracular wisdom, but at a very high price, which the king

[17] Rapin, *History of England,* Vol. I, p. 708.

refused to pay. Thereupon she went away and destroyed three of them, but, returning, asked just as much for the six as she had previously asked for the nine. This was again refused, whereupon she destroyed three more, and then came back still demanding the same price as for the original nine. Her pertinacity and his own curiosity at length overcame Tarquin, and he bought the remaining three and found them full of wisdom and advice concerning the policy to be pursued by the Romans. Since he was himself an author, we need have no doubt that the Sibyl's proceeding had Erasmus' full approbation. When they returned to Rome from their holiday, the young prelate found urgent letters awaiting him, commanding him to set off forthwith to his native land and containing the information no doubt that the political sky portended a storm. So pupil and preceptor parted, never again to meet on earth, since King Henry of England eventually joined the Pope's allies and led his forces against the French. While he was absent on this expedition, the Scotch marched into England and proceeded to overrun it, but were finally checked at the disastrous battle of Flodden in 1513, where our young Archbishop, his father the Scottish king, and great numbers of the Scottish nobility lost their lives fighting valiantly.

Erasmus seems to have had some real affection for this young man. It may have sprung from the fact that like himself the youth was forced to bear the bar sinister and be styled bastard by the thoughtless. However that was, Erasmus never spoke of him afterwards except in terms of the sincerest admiration, and the young prelate, on his side, to show his gratitude to his preceptor presented to Erasmus in parting, his signet ring, which had on it the head of the god Terminus. Erasmus always treasured this ring, and had engraved on it the motto of that deity, *Cedo nulli,* a fact which got him into trouble with some of his enemies in later years, who, not knowing much about Terminus, attributed the assumption of the motto to him personally.

After parting with his pupil he did not linger long in Rome. All his commerce had been with the learned who spoke Latin and Greek, and hence he was leaving Italy without having learned anything of the Italian language. Only once did this lack cause him any inconvenience, and that was when in Venice he met Bernard of Ocriculum. This man wrote history in a Latin as pure as that of Sallust, but refused to converse in any tongue but his native Italian. Erasmus was considerably chagrined and mentioned the matter in his *Apophthegmata.* De Burigni opines that Bernard refused to speak in Latin from fear of spoiling the purity of his style; but to us it would seem more probable that he could write Latin better than he could converse in it and, like the rest of us, did not want to appear at a disadvantage before a man like Erasmus, who spoke it as fluently as a dweller in ancient Rome. Erasmus consistently refused to learn any modern language and was as deficient in English and French as he was in Italian.

In relating his interview with Cardinal Grimani on a previous page, we there quoted that it cost him some mental struggle to decide on leaving Rome. Everything there was to his liking—rich and influen-

tial friends who were at the same time scholars and savants, fine libraries which had been thrown freely open to him, and, in addition to this, offers of lucrative and honorable positions. One of these positions which were to fall to him was a place in the office of the Penitentiarius Major, but what his title or duties were to be we know not. The head of this branch of the Roman Curia was always a Cardinal-priest and Doctor of Canon Law. Erasmus could certainly not fill this. But besides this, there were also the offices of Regent, Theologian, Datary, Corrector, Sealer, Canonist, and Secretary, any of which he was well qualified to fill. This offer probably came to him through the truest and at the same time the most highly placed friend whom he had made in Rome, Raphael Riario, Cardinal of St. George, who was the nephew of Pope Julius. What would lead one to think so is that for a long period of years, even back to the times of Sixtus IV, the office of Penitentiarius Major had been kept constantly in the della Rovere family. Sixtus had appointed to that office his nephew Giuliano della Rovere, who became afterwards Julius II, and he in turn appointed another della Rovere, his cousin Leonardo Grosso della Rovere, in 1505, to succeed himself in that office. So with his cousin as Penitentiarius Major and his uncle as Pope, it would seem that he was the most likely one to bestir himself in an effort to keep Erasmus, for whom he had the greatest admiration, close by himself. But it was in vain that they made him these tempting offers, for he had decided to go, and, besides, he had an insuperable reason for refusing, which does not seem to have occurred to his biographers—namely, his birth. We have already seen that for this alone he was shut out from all chances of promotion and could not hold the smallest benefice without a special dispensation from the Roman Curia, signed by the Pope. But to ask for such at this moment when he had been fêted and honored, to expose the secret which he had guarded with such care that only a very few of those in his native town who were still living knew of it, to make himself the subject of the idle gossip and the wagging tongues of all Rome, and to imperil his standing among all his friends, such a thing would be suicidal. Later on he would consider it, but not now. So he decided on England because England was open to him, while Rome was shut against him on account of this to him accursed blot. Without knowing to what to attribute Erasmus' departure from Rome just at this time, when his prospects there were so alluring, Drummond realized that it was nothing in England which made him turn his back on the Eternal City. We will quote his language:

> Erasmus, who, it must be confessed, was rather fond of regarding himself, and wished others to regard him, as an ill-used man, would fain have us believe that in leaving Rome he yielded to the most pressing solicitations from his English friends, and went relying on promises which were never fulfilled. By his own account—but this statement was made a great many years afterwards—he was so taken with the simplicity, the sobriety, the high

culture, and the kindness of the Italians, that he had quite made up his mind to settle at Rome, and would have done so had he not been irresistibly drawn back to England by the most splendid promises. Of these promises, however, there is very little trace except in his own letters. Mountjoy, writing to him from Greenwich on the 27th of May, does, indeed, assure him that he will be welcomed at the English court by the new king, who had already given proof of his fondness for literature, and speaks in general terms of the favor and the riches he may expect. He also speaks in glowing terms of the bounty of Henry's nature, contrasting so favorably with the niggardliness of his father's reign. But the only definite promise he makes is in the name of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, he says, will give him a benefice if he returns. Besides, this letter is not an invitation to Erasmus, but a reply to two letters of his which have unfortunately been lost, but in which, it is clear from Mountjoy's answer, he had complained that the climate of Italy did not agree with his health, as well as of other misfortunes, the nature of which can only be conjectured.[18]

The truth seems to be that, finding that he was hopelessly disbarred by his birth from all hopes of promotion in Italy, and hearing that the Prince of Wales, in whose good graces he already stood high, had succeeded to the English throne as Henry VIII, he began of his own accord to turn his thoughts once more towards his friends in London, and wanted only a very little encouragement to return to them.

So we feel the real reason for his abandoning Rome, which seems to have escaped Drummond's observing mind, was, as we have just stated, his ineligibility to hold any office within the gift of the Roman Curia on account of his birth.

A second reason which may have actuated him was that the sort of book which he had in mind to write next was little calculated to delight the souls of the Roman Court as at that time constituted. We refer to his celebrated work entitled *The Praise of Folly*.

In all other respects his Italian visit had been a pleasant experience; for besides having made a host of friends, he had met the most brilliant scholars of that country and had had the opportunity of measuring himself with them, a circumstance which gave him a supreme confidence in his own abilities. It taught him that in pure scholarship there were many who were his equals, and, possibly, here and there one who surpassed him in some special line of attainment, so that he must never rest on his laurels if he wished to reach a position in the learned world where he would have few peers and no superiors.

Like all travelers, he chose a different way back from Italy so that he might pass through varied scenes; and for this purpose he selected the route by Como, over the Splügen Pass into Chur, thence by Lake Constance to Strassburg. Later on he had many friends and learned associates in this city, but we see no trace in his letters that he made any stay here, for he seems to have hastened on down the Rhine to his

[18] *Erasmus*, Vol. I, p. 180.

own country, Holland. Rhenanus tells us that, after a short visit to friends at Louvain and Antwerp, he presently set out for England.

It is here to be remarked that his letters show no trace of his having made any visit to Steyn, although he was only a day's ride from his old monastery when he arrived at Antwerp. This is the more noticeable because we remember that he had promised Prior Servatius, when informing him of his arrival in Italy, that he would call to see him the following summer. But three summers had elapsed, and now he was within a few miles of his former brethren, but decided to pass on without calling on them. It is doubtful that the Prior could have detained him against his will had he been so minded, but evidently Erasmus had resolved to take no chances. We cannot surmise what feeling actuated him to do this. It might have been fear; it might have been contempt. He had made powerful friends in Rome, and this fact may have given him the assurance of being able to extricate himself from trouble, should any arise from this action of his. Besides, the visit would naturally be very distasteful to him; and, like all men of little moral bravery, he hated scenes and avoided them consistently all his life.

So, after staying with his acquaintances at Louvain, and Antwerp, he set sail for England and arrived there in the late summer of 1509. For almost two years after this we have not a single letter by which to trace his movements; but it was during this stay that he composed his second famous work and thereby put himself before the public eye in a most astounding manner. This work was *The Praise of Folly,* and we shall be compelled to devote considerable time to an analysis of the book, premising at once that it fully merits our deepest attention. Under the guise of an allegory, Erasmus has put more of himself into this work than into any other which he wrote, with the possible exception of the *Colloquies.* It will be our task to deduce from it what is Erasmus, and what is the subject matter proper.

CHAPTER XXI

THIRD VISIT TO ENGLAND: THE "MORIAE ENCOMIVM"

Erasmus gives a history of the origin of the *Praise of Folly* which we may accept or not, just as its reasonableness or improbability strikes us. At the very outset we are met by the difficulty of stating the exact time of its appearance. The first edition was printed at Paris by Gilles Gourmont, and bore no date. The next edition was issued by Matthew Schürer at Strassburg in August, 1511. Another edition appeared from the press of Thierry Martens at Antwerp, in January, 1512, and still another by Badius at Paris dated July 27, 1512. After this, many editions were published, until in 1522 Froben of Basle issued one with the preface dated 1508. Now this is an impossible date, for according to Erasmus' own testimony the book was not in existence until he returned from Italy in 1509. On the other hand, when Froben brought out the 1522 edition, Erasmus was living with him and superintending the printing of his own works. Hence this date must have been supplied by him. Like many other obscure things which we have had occasion to notice heretofore, his reason for putting a wrong date is not just clear to us, but we must not on that account imagine that he did not have a reason, and probably a very strong one. Surmises are idle, and yet it may not be entirely profitless to consider the matter a little. We must remember that he had just passed through Strassburg on his way from Italy to England, and Strassburg was the home of Sebastian Brant, the author of the famous satire, *The Ship of Fools*. Here is a peculiar coincidence, since Brant was the originator of this style of satire and had issued his famous book only fifteen years previously. Here, too, lived Matthew Schürer, who issued the second edition of *The Praise of Folly* almost immediately after the Paris edition, the latter being so faulty in its execution that Erasmus complained of it. Did he meet Brant or Schürer during his passage through Strassburg? Brant's work had attracted the attention of the world by its keen but always good-natured satire. By way of allegory he had loaded a ship with fools and had sent them off to a fools' paradise called Narragonia. This gives him the opportunity to castigate vigorously the vices and weaknesses of the times, and those high up in Church and State came in for their full share of the castigation. But, as we have said, he was always good-natured about it, and there was nothing personal or vitriolic in the work. In fact, he classed himself among the fools, in which particular he differed from Erasmus. He was essentially Catholic and conservative in religious matters and sought to improve rather than destroy what he censured. His

work, which he had written in German, was three years afterwards translated into Latin by James Locher; and if Erasmus had read it at all it was in this Latin translation. When he reached London in 1509, he found that literary circles there had just been presented with another *Ship of Fools* from the press of Wynkyn de Worde. This was part translation and part imitation of Brant's work, and had been written by Alexander Barclay, a Catholic priest and, afterwards, a Benedictine monk. Whether or not Erasmus had been previously acquainted with Brant's work, certainly he found it the subject of discussion in the social and religious circles wherein he was now moving. Had he already written his *Praise of Folly,* or was Barclay's work the spur that set him at it? If he had already written it en route, he must have found on his arrival in London that Barclay had in a measure anticipated him. If he had it already finished on his arrival, he must have found the moment inauspicious for its publication, and so have awaited a more opportune time. This is our conjecture in the matter, and we fully coincide with Allen that the work was not published until 1511, when he went over to Paris to see it through the press. To show how popular this style of writing was becoming, we may state in passing that Brant's work was again translated into English in 1517 by Henry Watson, under the title of *The Great Ship of Fools of the World,* and even in 1510 Wynkyn de Worde had issued *Cock Lovell's Boat* on similar lines. We must not forget also that Erasmus' friend and former publisher, Badius Ascensius, had written a Latin paraphrase of it in 1507, so that he had many opportunities to become acquainted with Brant's work. Now let us hear Erasmus' account of the origin of his own work. In his preface to the book, which he dedicated to Thomas More, he relates that while riding day by day during his return from Italy to England, and reflecting the while on the good English friends whom he was so soon to meet, he deemed it wise, in order to beguile the tedium of the way, to write something for their delectation when he should at length see them. In thinking of More his mind was struck with the coincidence that his friend's name bore a close resemblance to the Greek word for folly, that is, μωρία; and as folly was to be the subject of his book, he could not resist calling it the *Moriae encomium,* since it was to be dedicated to More. Forestalling any possible objection on the part of More, he thus ingeniously puts the matter: "But you will exclaim, 'What the mischief put that idea into your head?' Well, you see, your surname of More so nearly approaches the word *moria,* that it reminded me how far removed you are from anything like folly." After further elucidating this fanciful idea, he goes on to say that he knows More will like the sort of joking which he will find in the book, because he is generally fond of a joke, and consequently will, like another Democritus, enjoy a laugh at the follies of men. And then he makes a direct bid for the assistance of More in warding off the attacks which he shrewdly foresees the work will bring down upon his head.

Accept [he says], this little souvenir of your friend, which,

having been dedicated to you, is no longer mine but yours. For perchance there will be fault-finders who will misrepresent the things I have written, some saying that they are trifles quite unbecoming to a theologian, others alleging that they are too harsh to be quite consonant with Christian moderation, and will keep crying out that I am bringing back the old comedy or another Lucian with his satire, and that I am using my teeth on everything.

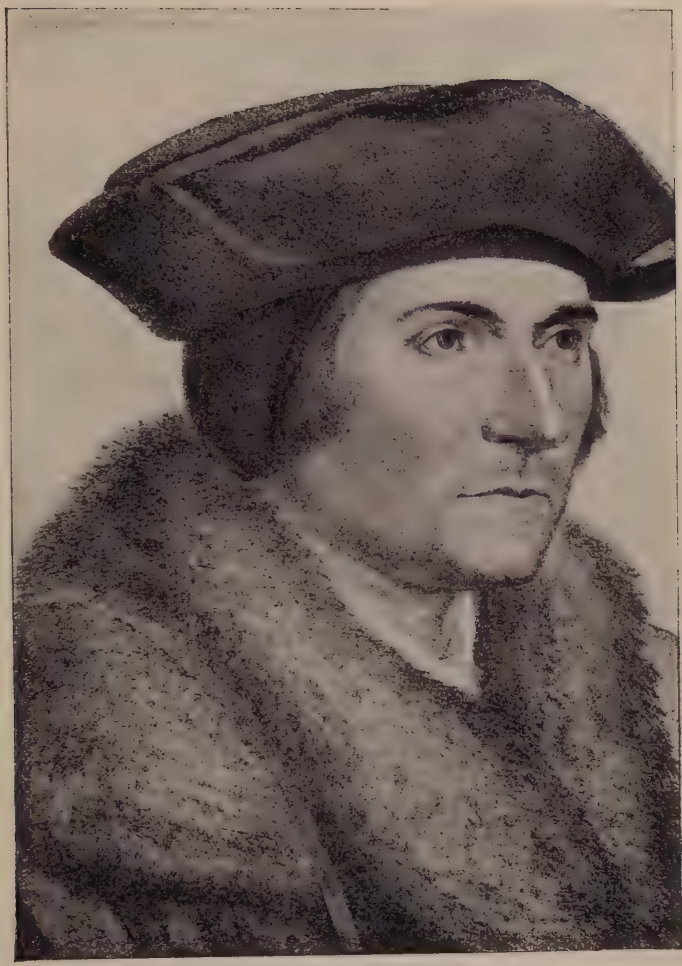
Then he goes on to adduce the examples of Homer and Vergil and Ovid as his sufficient justification, not forgetting others who have used similar methods, as, for instance, Isocrates, Lucian, Seneca, and even St. Jerome. He goes on to justify himself as follows:

Replying now to the charge of harshness, let me say that permission was always granted to men of genius to make sport of the common lot of men with impunity, and in a witty way, provided that license did not end in venom.[1] He who criticizes men's lives, so that no name is mentioned, seems rather to advise and admonish than to hurt, does he not? . . . Besides, he who spares no class of men would seem to be angry, not with any one man, but with every kind of vice. So if any man comes forward and declares himself injured, he will disclose either guilt or fear. . . . Moreover, in addition to refraining from the use of names, I have so tempered my pen that the judicious reader will easily perceive that I have sought to give pleasure rather than pain. . . . But why do I say these things to a patron so matchless as yourself, who are able to make even commonplace causes seem the very best possible. Farewell, most accomplished More, and defend your *Moria* diligently.[2]

And so he very airily passes any possible onus which might spring from the book, on to More's good-natured shoulders. Even in the moment of issuing the work he already felt an inner voice telling him that all was not well in the matter, and that he should perpend. He knew that he was doing what he had frequently done and was often to do again in the future, viz., make his attack and then run away to avoid a reprisal. Nichols says:

The *Moria* was placed in the charge of Richard Croke, in order that it might pass behind the author's back into the hands of some publisher to whom Erasmus was unknown. It appears to have been in fact printed by an obscure printer named Gilles Gourmont, in a small volume on old-fashioned black letter type, without date or name of author. Erasmus seems to have wished, if he could not disclaim the authorship, at any rate to be able to disown the publication.[3]

[1] "Modo ne licentia exiret in rabiem." (Eras. Ep. 222, l. 57.)
[2] *Ibid., passim.*
[3] *Epistles of Erasmus,* Vol. II, p. 15. It is evident that Nichols never saw a copy of this first edition of the *Moria,* or he would not have stated that it was published anonymously. I have seen two copies of this first edition, the one in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, and one in the hands of Olschki the bookseller in Florence, and both have Erasmus' name on title.



SIR THOMAS MORE

Holbein

The account which Erasmus himself gave of the writing and issuing of this book is very meagre, and occurs in his letter to John Botzheim written in 1523.

> The *Moria* was my amusement when I stayed at More's house on my return from Italy. I had so poor an opinion of it that I did not think it worth publishing (for I was myself in Paris when it was printed through the agency of Richard Croke in the most villainous type and form).[4]

It seems, however, that Croke was not responsible for it, and that the account above is not strictly true. At any rate Croke repudiated the statement, and Erasmus afterwards corrected it by removing "per Ricardum Crocum" and substituting "per nescio quos" instead.

To show how trifling a work of amusement it was to him at that time, he has left on record the statement that the *Moria* was the effort of only seven days, a rather remarkable accomplishment if true.[5] There was something furtive about the circumstances attending the issue of this book, and it would seem that its very existence was for a long time a secret between More and Erasmus. There is no mention of it in any of the letters written or received at that period, although there is abundant reference to the Lucian dialogues, the *Copia verborum,* and the other works that he then had in hand. So we come to the conclusion that it was printed privately and circulated cautiously until he saw how the world took it, and that the blows he dealt were felt all the more keenly because they were struck in the dark.

For those who love the satirical vein, the book is very pleasant reading, and for more than half the work, there is nothing to offend the feelings of even the most susceptible. Then we find that, like the wasp, its sting is in its tail.

Folly in the person of a woman begins by telling her auditors of all the benefits that she confers on her votaries. In folly lies real happiness, and without folly there is no pleasure truly worth while.

> When man, a creature made for the administration of affairs . . . took me into his councils, I gave him an advice worthy of me, namely, that he should take unto himself a woman, who is a foolish animal and a silly, but withal amusing and gentle, by whose domestic society his harsh man's mind might be softened, and by whose folly his soul might be sweetened. For that Plato seemed to hesitate whether to put woman into the class of reasoning beings

[4] Eras. Ep. I, p. 19, ll. 6 *sqq.*

[5] *Ibid.*, 337, ll. 126 *sqq.* See also p. 326. On a copy of the *Moria* once owned by Cotton Mather there appears in his handwriting the following extract from Heidfeld's *Sphinx, de artibus liberalibus,* beginning: "Quis primus Stultitiae Encomium scripsit? Dictator rei literariae Erasmus Moriam in lucem edidit, cui non plusquam septem dierum operam impendit." At this place Cotton Mather put an asterisk, and wrote below: "Credat Judaeus Apella, non ego." I am inclined to agree with Mather that it was a short period for such an extensive work, although we must not forget what Erasmus confided to Juan Maldonado in his letter of March 30, 1527: "Omnia nostra fere praecipitamus; hoc est naturae meae vitium."

> or into that of brutes, means nothing else than that he wished thereby to point out her foolishness. . . . And just as the Greek proverb tells that an ape is always an ape, even though dressed in fine raiment, so a woman is always a woman, that is, foolish, no matter what character she may assume. . . . [But they are] much more fortunate than the men. In the first place on account of their beauty, which they deservedly esteem more than anything else, and by the aid of which they tyrannize even over their own tyrants. . . . Then, what else do they long for in this life more than to please the men as much as possible? Is that not the reason for all these ornaments, these disguises, these baths, these hair dressings, these cosmetics, these perfumes, these artifices for beautifying, coloring, and primping up the features, eyes, and skin? now, is it not by folly that they make themselves admired of men? And what is there that men will not grant to women? And for what reward except that of pleasure? They delight them by their very foolishness. . . . You have then here the fountain from which springs the first and principal pleasure of life.[6]

In a similar manner Folly goes on to ridicule those who find their pleasure in the ultra refinements of the banquet table, where not only the stomach but also the eye and ear are titillated by sensuous pleasures. So, too, the backbiters are laughed at, and those who take unto themselves wives of whose antecedents they are ignorant. Folly then brings on the scene Self-Love, whom she claims as a sister, and whom she fully credits with playing her game.

> For what so foolish as to please and admire yourself? And how can anything you do be beautiful, or grateful, or honorable, if you are displeased with yourself? Take away this seasoning of life and forthwith the orator will seem cold with his gestures, the musician will please nobody with his music, the actor will be hissed with his poses, the poet will be laughed at with his muses, the painter will grow shabby with his art, the doctor will starve with his drugs. . . . In a word, each one must flatter himself, and any adulation must commend itself to him before it can be recommended to others.[7]

The vanity of old men and old women who desire to seem young again and to enjoy for a second time the pleasures of their youth, is not passed over unmentioned, and Folly encourages them by exclaiming, "How can it hurt you if everybody hisses you provided that you applaud yourself? And it is Folly alone who can accomplish this for you." [8]

Then two chapters further on Folly says:

[6] *Moriae encomium,* chap. xvii. Since the division into chapters established in 1765 by A. G. deMeusnier deQuerlon has been generally followed in all subsequent editions, references to this work will here be by chapter.

[7] *Ibid.,* chap. xxii.

[8] *Ibid.,* chap. xxxi.

Among the sciences themselves those are most in vogue which most nearly approach common sense: that is, folly. The theologians go hungry, the physicists get the cold shoulder, the astrologists are laughed at, and the dialecticians are neglected. But it is the doctor only who is "the equal of many men," for in that line of business the more ignorant, rash, and brainless he is, the more he is esteemed by our decorated nobility. Medicine as it is now practiced by many is nothing more than a little bit of flattery, just as rhetoric is.

Then the pettifoggers of the law receive a crack of Folly's whip, those gentlemen

> . . . whose profession the philosophers are wont to call asinine, and yet at the sweet will of these asses the greatest and smallest affairs are transacted. Thus they acquire great estates, while the theologian, having written tomes embracing the whole of divinity, nibbles on a lupine, while waging assiduous war with bedbugs and lice. As therefore these arts are more agreeable which have the greater affinity to Folly, so they are the most fortunate who have entirely abstained from all dabbling in learning, and have been led by Nature alone, who is never defective in any part, unless perchance we should wish to surpass the limits of our mortal lot. Nature hates pretense, and turns out much more agreeably when bothered by no art.[9]
>
> Let me return to the felicity of the fools, who, having spent their days in a very pleasant way, with no fear or anxiety about death, pass straightway into the Elysian fields, there to delight their pious and tranquil souls with their own particular enjoyments. Come now, let us compare any wise man's lot with that of such an arrant fool. Suppose that you place against him an exemplar of wisdom, a man, say, who has used up his whole boyhood and youth in acquiring learning, and has lost the sweetest part of life in constant midnight labors, anxieties, and exhausting toil, so that during what remains of his life, he is unable to enjoy the least bit of pleasure, but is ever sparing, poor, sad, gloomy, harsh, and unjust to himself, hateful and offensive to others, exhausted by anaemia, starvation, ill-health, blindness, prematurely broken down with old age and grey hairs, dying before his time. Now what does it matter how soon such a fellow dies, since he has never lived? There you have an excellent picture of your wise man.

Then Folly hits those who are vain even after death, and lay down the directions for their own funerals, noting minutely the number of paid mourners, the kind of music, and the speakers, who are to be engaged, just as if they were going to be spectators at their own obsequies. Those too who, having nothing of their own accomplishment to be proud of, scan their genealogical tree, and speak with pride of

[9] *Ibid.*, chap. xxxiii.

[10] *Ibid.*, chap. xxxvii.

their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, are not omitted, but held up as examples of self-pride to the *n*th degree. Nor does she forget those who, having drawn three circles, immediately pose as disciples of Euclid; and she particularly descants on the foolish pride of artists, actors, singers, orators, and poets. Again Folly points out how many are caught by a little skilfully administered flattery, which is so soothing to self-love. It lifts up depressed souls, cheers the sad, stimulates the languid, arouses the stupid, strengthens the sick, procures affection and retains it when secured. In a few words, it is the old case of "scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." So too, in speaking of preachers and their preachings, she says:

> The mind of man is so moulded that it is far more attracted by what is fictitious than by what is true. If anyone wish a plain and obvious proof of this, let him seek sermons and churches, in which, if something serious is being spoken, all are asleep, nodding their heads, appearing thoroughly bored. But if the bawler—pardon me, I mean the orator—as is often done, begin to relate some old yarn, straightway they awake, and everybody sits up and drinks it in eagerly.[11]

Folly seems to have a great animosity towards the grammarians and all other sorts of precisionists in language:

> If one of these shall have found an obsolete word . . . or turned up a fragment of marble covered with a mutilated inscription, great Jupiter! what exultation, what triumphs, what encomiums does he receive, just as if he had conquered Africa or captured Babylon! And then what of those who, when they have exhibited everywhere their cold and insipid verses (for there are not lacking those who will admire such trash), are believed to have received into their breasts the soul of Vergil. And there is nothing sweeter than the way in which they praise and admire each other with mutual liking, and cordially scratch each other's back. But if anyone else, even by a single little word, has erred, and one of these sharp-eyed gentlemen by luck perceives the fact, great Hercules! what tragedies forthwith, what fierce contention, what epithets, and what invectives! May all the grammarians fall foul of me if I am lying! I knew a certain all-accomplished fellow, a Greek and Latin scholar, a mathematician, a philosopher, a very king's thesaurus in all these things, who, when he was past sixty, laying aside everything else, tortured and twisted his brain about grammar for more than twenty years, and deemed himself happy if he might live long enough to demonstrate surely how the eight parts of speech might be differentiated, a thing that none of the Greeks or Latins had hitherto been able fully to accomplish.[12]

And then she speaks of the empty folly of authors:

[11] *Ibid.*, chap. xlv.

[12] *Ibid.*, chap. xlix.

Of this sort are those who seek immortality by writing books. While they all owe me the greatest obligation, more especially are those indebted to me who smear their paper with mere trifles. For those who write learnedly for the judgment of a few educated men and fear the criticism of neither the learned nor the unlearned are more to be commiserated than envied, in that they are forever punishing themselves. They keep adding, subtracting, replacing, repeating, restoring, and showing it about, and then they produce it in the ninth year, nor can they ever be satisfied with it; and they purchase the useless reward, that is, praise, and that of only a very few people, by so many nightly labors, by so much loss of sleep—the sweetest of all things—and by so much anxiety and perspiration. Add now the injury to health, the damage to personal appearance, the bleary eyes, or even total blindness, the poverty, the envy, the lack of pleasures, the quick approach of old age, the premature death, and all the other consequences which may follow. By such disastrous means does the wise man consider that he must labor in order to be read and approved by one or two readers. But how much more happily does this writer of mine rave on, while without any effort he jots down whatever may come to the end of his pen, even his dreams, caring little for the waste of paper, not unconscious that the more trifling are the things he writes, the more will he be praised by the multitude, that is, by the fools and the ignorant.[13]

And so we might go on quoting at length, but, not desiring to tire our readers, we shall pass on to the part of the work which has received the most notice, which has always been quoted, and will probably continue to be, while religious controversies flourish and delight men's minds.

Folly goes on:

Undoubtedly that tribe of men belong to me who delight in hearing and talking about miracles and false portents, nor do they become weary of retailing stories about spectres, ghosts, hobgoblins, imps, and thousands of such miraculous things, provided that the recital is duly awe-inspiring; and the further they are from the truth, the more eagerly are they believed, and the more they tickle credulous ears. And such things help them not only to pass the time, but also serve as a source of profit, especially to priests and preachers. Closely related to such dupes are those who have adopted the foolish but pleasant belief that, on any day when they have gazed on a painted or wooden image of St. Christopher, they shall be in no danger of death; or if they have saluted the image of St. Barbara with certain prescribed prayers, they shall return safe from battle; or if they have propitiated St. Erasmus on certain days with a set of candles, and suitable prayers, they will become wealthy. . . . Now what shall I say of those who flatter themselves so soothingly with fictitious pardons for their sins,

[13] *Ibid.*, chap. 1.

and measure the duration of purgatory with hour-glasses, marking down without any chance of error, as if from a mathematical table, the centuries, the years, the months, the days, and even the hours? What, too, of those who rely upon incantations or prayers which some impostor, either for amusement or his own gain, has thought out, promising them everything, riches, honors, pleasures, affluence, good health, long life, a flourishing old age, and finally a seat next Christ in heaven, which for a fact they do not wish to have immediately, but only when they find that the pleasures of this life which they have clung to so eagerly have at length deserted them, then let them enjoy the heavenly delights? Here is a merchant, for instance, or a soldier, or a judge, who, having laid down a little piece of money of all the sums that he has taken unjustly, deems that the filthy slough of his whole life is cleansed at once, and imagines that, as by an agreement, he can atone for all his false oaths, all his lusts, all his drunkenness, all his quarrels, all his murders, all his deceptions, and all his treachery; and so atone for them that he may be at liberty to return to a new series of crimes.[14]

From this she goes on to assail the theologians:

Perhaps it would be better to pass over the theologians in silence, and not to provoke that Star Chamber, nor touch that bed of thistles, which is remarkably haughty and irritable, lest perhaps they attack me in a body with their six hundred conclusions, and constrain me to recant, which if I refuse, forthwith they cry out upon me as a heretic. For that is the kind of thunder with which they terrify those whom they dislike. There is of a surety no other class of people who less willingly acknowledge my benefits to them, yet for no small reasons are they indebted to me, since these fortunate ones inhabit a sort of a third heaven by means of their own self-love, whence they look down on all other mortals as cattle creeping along the ground, and almost pity them. They the while are so walled in by the array of magisterial definitions, conclusions, corollaries, and propositions, expressed and implied, and so greatly do they abound in expedients for their defense, that if you bind them down with the chains of Vulcan, still will they elude you by their fine distinctions, their new-fangled phrases, and their lofty terms, by means of which they cut all your knots as easily as would a two-edged axe. Moreover, they explain the most profound mysteries as best suits themselves: as, for instance, how the world was created and arranged; through what channels the taint of Adam's sin descended to posterity; . . . how in the Eucharist the accidents are present without a substance. But these are commonplace, and it is only when some questions considered worthy of great and inspired theologians arise that they really wake up. Such are the following: Whether the divine generation required the slightest moment of time? Whether there were several filiations in Christ? Whether it is possible for the Father to hate the Son? . . . Whether after our resurrection we shall eat

[14] *Ibid.*, chap. xl.

and drink, guarding against hunger and thirst as we do now? There are innumerable fine-spun distinctions, far more subtle than these, about notions, relations, formalities, quiddities, tenuities, which no man, unless he had the eye of Lynceus, could possibly discern, and only then if he could perceive in the thickest darkness something that was nonexistent. Add, to these, opinions which are so astonishing that the oracles of the Stoics which they call *paradoxes* seem most stupid and far-fetched in comparison: as, for instance, whether it is a lesser crime to slaughter a thousand men than to mend a shoe for a poor man on Sunday; or, whether it is better for the whole world to perish "with its food and raiment," as they say, rather than that a little lie should be told. Now the methods of so many schoolmen render these most subtle of subtleties more subtle still, so that you will free yourself from a labyrinth sooner than you will extricate yourself from the entanglements of the Realists, the Nominalists, the Thomists, the Albertists, the Occamists, the Scotists, and the others, of whose sects I have mentioned only the leading names. And in all of them there is so much erudition mingled with so much of captiousness that I think the Apostles would need another Divine Spirit if they were compelled to discuss these matters with this new race of theologians. Paul could believe; but when he said that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not," he defined it very unscholastically. In the same way he was full of charity, but he had not the slightest regard for dialectics when he was analyzing and defining that virtue in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter thirteen. Reverently, no doubt, did the Apostles consecrate the Eucharist, yet if they were asked about the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem;* about transubstantiation; about the differences existing in Christ's body in Heaven, on the Cross, and in the sacrament of the Eucharist; about the moment when transubstantiation takes place—since the words by which this is accomplished, consisting as they do of several syllables, consume an appreciable time—they would not, I deem, have answered with the same acuteness that the Scotists display in their dissertations and definitions. They were personally acquainted with the mother of Jesus, but which one of them has ever so philosophically demonstrated how she was preserved from the sin of Adam as these theologians of ours? Peter received the keys, and received them from Him who confides not in the unworthy; but whether he comprehended that a man may hold the key of knowledge yet be ignorant himself I know not, but, for a certainty, he nowhere touched on such a subtlety. They baptized everywhere, and yet nowhere did they teach what was the formal, material, efficient, and final cause of baptism, nor do they make any allusion as to its delible or indelible character. They adored, indeed, but in spirit, following no other rule than that of the Gospel, "God is a spirit; and they that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth." But it does not appear that it was then revealed to them that they must adore in one and the same act Christ himself, and the image of Christ drawn on a

wall, and only if his two fingers are pointing forwards, his hair flowing down, and the halo round his head is triplicate. For who may perceive these distinctions, unless he shall have spent thirty-six whole years in the physics and metaphysics of Aristotle and Scotus? In the same way the Apostles inculcate on us the need of grace; but they never distinguish between grace *gratis datam* and grace *gratificantem.* They exhort to good works; but make no distinction between *opus operans* and *opus operatum.* Always they inculcate the virtue of charity; but do not differentiate between *infused* and *acquired;* nor explain whether it is an *accident* or a *substance,* or whether it is a thing *created* or *uncreated.* They detested sin; but may I die if they could have defined scientifically what that thing is which we call sin, unless perchance they were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Scotists.

Then Folly suggests that the whole tribe of Scotists, Thomists, etc., be sent to fight against the Turks and Saracens. But lest she may be misunderstood, and be considered too sweeping in her condemnation, she hastens to say:

But perhaps it may seem to you that I am saying these things for a joke. That is not to be wondered at, since among these divines themselves there are some of the more learned who are offended to the soul by these frivolous subtleties of the theologians, for such these things appear to them. There are some who execrate this kind of thing as smacking of sacrilege, and consider it the height of impiety to speak with an unclean mouth of things that are so sacred that they ought to be worshipped rather than explained; to use in disputation the profane quibbles of the pagan philosophers, to define such mysteries with such arrogant assumption, and to pollute the majesty of sacred theology with such cold and sordid phrases and opinions. But meanwhile these men are mightily pleased with themselves, and pat themselves on the back, spending their nights and days over their fascinating studies, so that no time is left them to read over even once the Gospels or the Epistles of St. Paul. And while they thus occupy themselves over scholastic trifles, they deem that they are holding up the universal Church from tottering to destruction, by the props of their syllogisms, just as the poets represent Atlas sustaining the universe on his shoulders. Now you can imagine what happiness is theirs while they form and re-form the Sacred Scriptures at their own behest, just as you would mould wax, while they demand that their conclusions, to which a few of the Schoolmen have subscribed, should be regarded like the laws of Solon, and received in preference to pontifical decrees, and while, as censors of the world, they condemn to be recanted everything that does not square to a nicety with any and every one of their conclusions, whether explicit or implied, and oracularly proclaim, "This proposition is scandalous; this is irreverent; this smacks of heresy; this rings hollow"; so that at length neither Baptism, nor the Gospel, nor Paul or Peter, or St. Jerome or

Augustine, nay, not even Thomas the most Aristotelian of them all, shall make a man a Christian, unless he secures the suffrages of these Bachelors of Theology, such is the subtlety of their judgment.[15]

And so Folly goes on for many paragraphs longer. But we must hasten on to the real kernel of the entire work, the chapter on the monks. As one might expect from what we have previously learned of his views with regard to monks, here Erasmus is at home, and at his best. So Folly, or Erasmus, if you like, proceeds to flay his brethren in the most approved fashion, and the satire takes on a still more bitter flavor, the whip cracks more insistently on the flanks of the hated fraternity.

Next to these in happiness are those who commonly style themselves *Religious* and *Monks,* by either name most falsely labeled, since a good part of them are far from religious, and in every place there is nothing less solitary, or often to be met with, than they. I cannot see anything more miserable than these men, did I not come to their assistance in many ways. For although this class of men are so execrated that a chance meeting with them is considered unlucky, yet they are marvelously pleased with themselves. In the first place, they think it the highest piety to have so shunned learning that they are not even able to read. Then in the churches they roar out with their asinine braying their psalms, counted indeed, but not understood, and deem the ears of the saints will be sweetly soothed thereby. There are some of them who make a good thing out of their dirt and mendicity, and beg for bread at our doors with great bellowing, even obtruding themselves into every inn, coach, and boat, to the considerable disadvantage of the other beggars. And in this manner these most delightful of men remind us, so they say, of the Apostles, by their dirt, their ignorance, their clownishness, and their shamelessness. Nothing delights them more than to do all things by rote, with almost mathematical exactness, to omit the least tittle of which would be a sin; as for instance, with how many knots their sandals are to be tied, of what color their girdles, how their habits are to be differentiated from each other, and of what material they are to be made, how many inches in width constitute a proper girdle, and the pattern of it, how loose the hood should be, how many fingers wide shall be the tonsure, and how many hours they shall sleep. Cannot everyone see how unjust such a sameness is, where there is such a difference in personality and disposition? And for such trifles not only do they make slight account of others, but even despise them; and though they make profession of apostolic charity, they make a terrible commotion if one's habit be worn amiss, or if it be a shade too dark. Some of them, too, you will find so scrupulously exact, that they will wear their outside garment of haircloth, while the inner is of the finest fabric; others, on the contrary, whose outer garment is linen will wear wool next the skin. Again you will find some of them who shun the touch of money

[15] *Ibid.,* chap. liii.

like poison, but do not refrain from contact with wine and women. They are zealous not to resemble each other in their way of life, and to be as dissimilar as possible; but they have not the slightest desire to resemble Christ. A great part of their felicity consists in their names, some liking to be styled Cordeliers, others Colettines, these Friars Minors, those Minims, some again Observantines, and others Benedictines; these prefer the name of Cistercians, those are proud to be called Brigittines; nor must we forget the Augustinians, nor the Williamites, nor yet the Dominicans, as if it were not enough to be called Christians. A great part of them depend so much on ceremonial and traditionary trifles that they deem one heaven an inadequate reward for such great deserving, not remembering that Christ some day will turn his back on all this, and simply ask them if they have fulfilled his own single precept of charity. Thereupon one will point to his paunch, distended with every sort of fish; another will pour out a hundred bushels of psalms; another will enumerate the myriads of fasts he has kept, crediting himself also with the number of times that he almost burst his stomach at a single meal to make up for them. Another will bring forward such a heap of ceremonies performed that six ships of burthen would scarcely carry them; while another will boast that for three score years he has never touched money, unless his fingers were well protected with double gloves. Another will present his cowl, which is so dirty and filthy that not even a sailor would deign to wear it; while another will relate that for more than fifty-five years he has lived the life of a sponge, remaining ever fixed in the same place. Still another will allude to his voice, hoarse with perpetual chanting; another will claim that by the solitariness of his life he has contracted a lethargy; and this last one will allege that his tongue has lost its function by constant silence. But Christ, interrupting their never-ending bragging, will say: "Whence comes this new race of Jews? One law alone do I recognize as my own, but of this I hear no mention. And long ago, speaking plainly, and using no veil of parables I promised my Father's kingdom, not to cowls, prayers, or fastings, but to the practices of charity. I do not cherish those who cherish their own deeds too much; and let those who deem themselves more holy than I am, and those who have preferred their traditionary trifles to my precepts, dwell, if they wish, in the numerous heavens of the Persians, or command these latter to build a new heaven for them." When they shall hear these things, and shall see sailors and wagoners preferred to themselves, what glances, think you, will they cast at each other? But meanwhile they are happy in their expectations, a blessing they owe to me.

And no one dares to treat these fellows with disdain, especially the Mendicant Friars, even though they are remote from public affairs, because they obtain everybody's secrets from hearing confessions, as they call them. They hold it a crime to betray such confidences, however, unless, when drunk, they desire to amuse themselves with some story more agreeable than usual; but they only

sketch the matter so that it may be conjectured, meanwhile keeping the names of the parties hidden. But if you should irritate these wasps, they take a fine vengeance on you in their sermons to the people, scoring you as an enemy, though covertly, and with indirect phrases, yet so as to make everybody understand, unless he be an idiot. Nor will they stop barking until you have thrown them a sop. But come now, would you not rather watch any actor, any mountebank, than these fellows who play the orator so ridiculously in their sermons, the while they most suavely try to put into practice those things which orators have handed down to us about the art of speaking? Great Jupiter, how they gesticulate, how aptly they modulate their voices, how they purr, how they throw themselves about, how they change their features, now this way, now that, how they disturb everything with their shoutings! And each monk hands down to his brethren, as a secret, this art of speaking, and although it is not permitted to me to know the secret, I am going to hazard a few guesses. In the first place they make an invocation, a thing which they have borrowed from the poets. Then, when they are about to speak about charity, they take as their exordium the Egyptian river Nile; or, if about to relate the mystery of the crucifixion, they begin auspiciously with an account of Bel the Babylonian dragon; or should they discuss the matter of fasting, they start out with mentioning the twelve signs of the Zodiac; or if they desire to say a few words about faith, they preface it with a great deal about the squaring of the circle. I myself have heard tell of a remarkably foolish—I should say, a remarkably learned—man who, in a celebrated sermon in which he was about to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and in which he meant both to show his uncommon learning and please the ears of his theological friends, proceeded to do it by an entirely new method, namely, by making use of its letters, syllables, and its parts of speech; then from the agreement of its noun with its verb, and from the agreement of the noun substantive with the noun adjectival; to the great admiration of many, but to the disgust of a few, who began to murmur, "Whither doth all this rubbish tend?" At length he spun out his theory to that degree that he could show the idea of the entire Trinity might be expressed in the rudiments of grammar, and in such a way that no mathematician could express it more clearly if he were to draw diagrams in the sand. And over such a sermon this most theological of theologians sweated eight whole months, so that to-day he is as blind as a mole; and no wonder, since he transferred the keen edge of his sight to the sharp point of his genius. But the fellow thinks nothing of the loss of his sight, deeming it a small price to pay for such glory. I also heard another preacher of eighty years, so great a theologian, that you would imagine Scotus born again in him. Being about to explain the mystery of the name Jesus, he showed with marvelous subtlety that whatever could be said of it was contained in its very letters. For that it was declined with three case-endings only showed that it was a figure of the Holy Trinity. Then as the first case-ending of

> Jesus is s, the second case-ending is m, and the third case-ending is u, there existed therein an ineffable mystery: that is, the three little letters indicated that Jesus was the *summus,* or the beginning, the *medius,* or the middle, and the *ultimus,* or the end of all things. Still there remained a mystery more abstruse than this, when viewed in a mathematical sense. He divided the name Jesus into two equal parts, leaving the s in the middle. Then he showed that letter to be the ש of the Jews, which they pronounce *Syn.* Now *Syn,* I think, signifies in the language of the Scots *Sin,* and so it clearly demonstrates that Jesus means he who is to take away the sins of the world. Swallowing this with open mouths, the theologians especially being dumb with admiration, they were almost turned to stone like Niobe.
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> . . .

At this point, Folly—or Erasmus—offends against good manners by stating what she did to express her utter contempt for the old preacher's ingenious comparison, and since we cannot record it here on our clean pages, we skip a few paragraphs, wherein the ancient divisions of the *firstly, secondly, thirdly,* etc., come in for their share of ridicule, and take up the thread at the *fourthly.*

> And in the fourth place, assuming a new character, they start a theological question, pertaining neither to earth nor to heaven, but to the art of oratory. Here at length they exhibit their theological pride, assailing our ears with the magnificent names of doctors solemn, doctors subtle, and even doctors most subtle, doctors seraphic, doctors holy, and doctors irrefutable. Then they juggle for the delectation of the ignorant multitude syllogisms with their majors, minors, and conclusions, their corollaries, their most pointless suppositions, and their more than scholastic trifles. But now comes the fifthly, in which they must display their highest artifice. Here they bring in some silly and ignorant fable from the *Mirror of History,* or the *Gesta Romanorum,* and will interpret the same allegorically, tropologically, and anagogically; and thus they will finish their Chimæra, such a one as not even Horace achieved when he wrote his *Humano capiti,* etc.[16]

But perhaps we have given enough of the ridicule poured out upon the poor monks and theologians, and so will pass on to what Erasmus has to say about the Pope and the higher ranks of the Church hierarchy, after which we shall make suitable comment, if the case warrants it.

> Now for a long time the Popes, the Cardinals, and the bishops have eagerly sought to rival and even to surpass the establishments of princes. But if they would only remember what the snow-white linen surplice is intended to remind them of, that is, a completely unspotted life; that the pontifical hat with its double but connected mitres denotes an absolute knowledge of both the Old and New Testament alike; that the hands clothed in gloves imply a pure administration of the Sacraments free from all contamination of

[16] *Ibid.,* chap. liv.

worldly things. What means the crozier but the most vigilant care for the flock entrusted to their charge; and what the cross borne before them but their victory over all their human affections? So I say that, if they reflect on these and similar requisites, would they not spend a thoughtful and anxious existence? But now they obey the first part of the injunction beautifully in feeding themselves; but they leave the feeding of their flocks to Christ himself, or to the *brethren,* as they style them, and turn them over to substitutes. They forget what their title of bishop means; that is, labor, watchfulness, and diligence; but in netting money they certainly act the part of men who are watchful only for their own interests.

Similarly, if the Cardinals deem themselves the successors of the Apostles, let them act as they did. In such case they will not be the masters, but simply the administrators of spiritual gifts, of which they must render a most rigid account in a very short while. Yea, if they would but reflect a little even on their official dress, and cogitate on what the spotlessness of their white robe indicates. Is it not complete and extraordinary innocence of life? And that inner purple garment, does that not betoken the most ardent love of God? And what of that exterior cloak so long and trailing? which covers the mule of His Most Reverend, though indeed it is copious enough to cover a camel at the same time. Does it not represent charity spreading itself out to its widest extent in order to benefit everyone —by teaching, exhorting, consoling, reproving, admonishing, ending wars, resisting wicked rulers, and spending willingly for the flock of Christ not only its wealth, but every drop of its blood? And what need have these successors of the poor and lowly Apostles of wealth at all? So, I say, if they reflect on these matters, they will not desire. and will readily relinquish such an office; or at least will lead an industrious and earnest life, such as the Apostles lived.[17]

And now he comes to the Popes, and we are interested to see how he treats the head of that great Church of which he himself, though most unwillingly, was by virtue of his priesthood a representative.

So, too, if those Popes who are Christ's vicars endeavor to emulate his life: his poverty, his labors, his teaching, his cross, his contempt of this world; if they were to think of the meaning of the word "pope," that is, "father," or of their title of "most holy," who on this earth would be more miserable than they? Or who in such case would buy that office with the whole of his fortune, and, having bought it, defend it with the sword, with the poisoned cup, and with every kind of force? If wisdom should once enter in, how much of their pomp would she abate? Wisdom, did I say? Nay, only one grain of the salt of which Christ speaks. Such wealth, such honors, such sway over others, such victories, such offices, such positions of influence, such tributes and rebates, such numbers of horses, mules, and lackeys, and such delights! Behold, what an ingathering— what a harvest—what an ocean of good things I have compressed

[17] *Ibid.,* chaps. lvii, lviii.

in these few words! And in place of these would come vigils, fastings, tears, prayers, sermons, studies, sighs, and a thousand wretched labors of this sort. Nor must we forget to state how many scribes, copyists, notaries, lawyers, promoters of causes, secretaries, grooms, ostlers, money-changers, procurers—and I had almost added something worse, but I fear lest I shock your ears—in short, such a huge mass of people who are an onus on—pardon me, I meant, do honor to —the Roman See, would be driven to starvation. This were an inhuman and abominable crime, but how much more detestable, forsooth, that these mighty princes of the Church, the very lights of the world, should be brought back once more to the scrip and staff. Now, generally, if there is any labor to be done, it is left to Peter and Paul, who have plenty of leisure; but if there be anything of grandeur or pleasure, that they take for themselves. And so it happens that, by my help, scarcely any class of men live more luxuriously and less burdened by care; so that they deem Christ to be wonderfully pleased if they play the part of bishops with mystic and almost theatrical state and ceremonies, rejoicing in the titles of "your Beatitude," "your Reverence," and "your Holiness," and in distributing blessings and anathemas. Miracles are obsolete; teaching the people is laborious; to interpret the Sacred Scriptures is the prerogative of the Schoolmen; to pray is tedious; to shed tears, wretched and womanish; poverty is sordid; to be conquered is disgraceful and unworthy of him who will hardly permit the greatest kings to kiss his blessed feet; and finally to die is unbecoming, and to be crucified is ignominious. There remain only arms, and those pleasing speeches of which Paul speaks; and they are certainly generous of those, namely, their interdicts, suspensions, repeated excommunications, anathemas, pictures of vengeance, and that terrific thunder, whereby with a single nod they send men's souls to furthest Tartarus. And this is the weapon which these most holy fathers in Christ and Christ's vicars direct against none more vigorously than against those who, at the instigation of the devil, have attempted to diminish and waste the patrimony of Peter. Although these are Peter's words in the Gospel, "Lord, we have left all and have followed Thee," yet they call his patrimony lands, towns, taxes, imposts, and sway over others. And while, burning with zeal for Christ, they fight with fire and sword for these things, and not without a vast outpouring of Christian blood, they think for a fact that they are defending like the Apostles the Church which is the Spouse of Christ, by valiantly putting to rout its enemies, as they call them. As if there could be any enemies more destructive to the Church than impious Popes, who by their silence allow the worship of Christ to decay, hinder it by dishonest laws, defile it by forced interpretations, and slay it by their pestilential life. Moreover, although the Church of Christ was founded, strengthened, and nourished by blood, now, as you see, they have recourse to the sword, just as if Christ, who knows how to protect his flock in his own way, had failed them utterly. And although war is so cruel that it becomes not men but

beasts, so senseless that the poets represent it as sent by the Furies, so like the plague that it infects the lives and manners of all, so unjust that it is wont to be waged by the vilest of mercenaries, so impious that it bears not the slightest relation to Christ; yet neglecting everything else, they make this their sole occupation. Here you may see decrepit old men displaying the hardihood of youth, deterred by no expense, fatigued by no sort of toil, and not to be persuaded from any of it even if they thereby turn laws, religion, peace, and all the affairs of man upside down. Nor are there wanting learned flatterers who style this manifest insanity nothing but zeal, piety, and fortitude, having devised a way by which it is possible to draw the sword and plunge it into the bowels of their brother without offending against that supreme charity which, according to the precept of Christ, every Christian owes to his neighbor.

I am yet uncertain, whether the Popes learned this fighting Christianity from the German bishops, or these latter from them. Be that as it may, these bishops do the thing more simply; for, laying aside their episcopal dress, and omitting entirely their blessing of the people and all other ceremonies of that sort, they live like satraps, and deem it unworthy and little becoming the dignity of a bishop to die elsewhere than in the line of battle. So, too, the inferior clergy, deeming it wrong to differ from the saintly practices of their episcopal superiors, cry "well done!" and fight for their tithes as much like soldiers as they can with swords, sticks, stones, or anything else that is a weapon. How quickly can they light on something in the Scriptures by which to terrify the poor people, and convince them that they owe them more than tithes! But in the meantime it never enters their heads to consider what they owe the people, though they can read about the duties of their office on almost every page. Their tonsure admonishes them not at all that the priest ought to be free from all the desires of this world, and ought to meditate on nothing but celestial matters. But these sweet souls say that they have performed their duties perfectly, if they have mumbled after some fashion some little prayers; but, by Hercules, I wonder very much whether any god hears or understands them, since they can scarcely hear or understand them themselves, even when they roar them out aloud. But priests have this in common with those who are not of the elect, that all of them watch carefully after the harvest of gain, and all are posted in the laws that govern such things. If there is any burden to be borne, they skilfully throw it on to the shoulders of someone else, and toss it like a ball from hand to hand. For just as secular princes delegate certain governmental positions to their subordinate ministers, and these ministers likewise turn such duties over to others; so likewise these, on account of their modesty, leave all works of piety to the people. The people in turn pass such duties on to the *ecclesiastics,* as they call them, just as if they themselves did not belong to the Church, just as if their taking the baptismal vows had been an unmeaning ceremony. Thereupon the priests who are called *seculars,* as if initiated in worldly

matters, and not in Christ, pass the duty on to the *regulars*. The *regulars* in turn pass it on to the monks, of whom those who are too lax pass it on to their stricter brethren; these with one accord pass it on to the *Mendicants,* and the *Mendicants* pass it on to the *Carthusians,* with whom piety lies hidden, and lies so well hidden that it is seldom permitted to be seen. Similarly the Popes, while most diligent in harvesting money, relegate those of their duties which are too apostolic to the bishops, the bishops in turn to the pastors, the pastors to the curates, and the curates to the mendicant friars, who finally thrust them back on to those by whom the wool of the sheep is shorn.

But it is not my purpose to examine the lives of Popes and the ecclesiastics lest I seem to be weaving a satire, not pronouncing an encomium; or lest I be set down as censuring good kings while I praise bad ones. But I have touched on a few things thus briefly, in order that it may clearly appear that there is no mortal being who can live happily unless he has been initiated into my society and keeps me propitious to him. . . .

But why do I so carefully confine myself to one example?—when it is the common usage of the theologians to stretch their heaven, that is, Sacred Scripture, like a skin; and when the words of Sacred Scripture, which in their own place are in complete accord, in the writings of St. Paul are in opposition to each other, if we may credit St. Jerome, he of the five tongues, who relates that when Paul was at Athens, and by chance beheld an inscription on an altar, he twisted the same into an argument for the Christian religion, and, having omitted the other words, which would have spoiled his design, he selected the last two words only, namely, these: *To the Unknown God*—and even these two slightly altered, since the whole inscription ran as follows: *To the Gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa; to the Gods of Unknown and Strange Nations.* It is after this example, I surmise, that our young divines accommodate to their own usage four or five words torn out here and there, and even, if need be, deliberately corrupted, although what precedes and what follows in the text either bears no relation to the matter, or is even flatly in contradiction. This they do with such cheerful impudence that very often the lawyers envy the theologians. What is there now they will not undertake, since the great (I had almost blabbed his name, but I remembered in time the Greek proverb [18]) commentator had expressed an opinion from the words of St. Luke, which no more agreed with the spirit of Christ than fire with water. For, when His last agony was at hand, at which time good clients are especially wont to be near their patrons and to fight for them with as much power as they are able, Christ, in order to take away from His disciples all reliance on such help, inquired of them whether they had wanted for anything when He had sent them forth so little furnished for their journey that He did not provide them even with shoes against the wounding from thorns and pebbles, or a scrip

[18] Possibly that of the chattering jackdaw.

against hunger. When they replied that they had wanted for nothing, He said: "But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a scrip, and he that hath not, let him sell his coat, and buy a sword." Now, when the whole doctrine of Christ inculcates nothing else than meekness, patience, and a contempt of the world, is it not plain to anyone what that passage means?—namely, that He might impoverish His disciples even more, so that not only would they lay aside shoes and scrip, but also cast away the clothes from their backs, so that, naked and unhindered, they might perform their duty of preaching the Gospel, providing nothing for their wants except a sword, not such a one as robbers and murderers carry, but the sword of the spirit, which pierces into the deepest recesses of the heart, lopping off at once all our base affections, so that there is nothing therein but piety. Now see, I pray you, how our great theologian twists this passage. He interprets the sword as a defense against persecution, the scrip as a suitable amount of provisions, as if Christ, having changed His mind, because He had on that previous occasion sent his disciples meanly equipped, now recanted His former instructions. Or as if He had forgotten what He had told them, that they would be blessed when they were afflicted with reproaches, indignities, and blows, forbidding them to resist evil with evil, for the meek and not the cruel would be blessed, or as if He had forgotten that He had called their attention to the example of the sparrows and the lilies, and now He was so unwilling that they should set out on their mission without a sword that He ordered them to sell their garments and buy one, preferring them to go naked, rather than without a sword. And just as by a sword this divine considers to be meant anything pertaining to the defending of themselves against force, so by the scrip he understands all that they would require for food and drink. And thus does this interpreter of the divine mind bring forth the Apostles, armed with lances, crossbows, slings, and catapults, for the preaching of the Crucified One. . . .

But it is foolish for me to pursue this matter which is so endless that all the volumes of Chrysippus or Didymus could not contain it. But I wished them to bear in mind that since they have given such license to these masters in divinity, pardon should also be granted me, a feeble theologian, if I have not quoted everything exactly. Now at length I return to Paul, who speaking of himself, says, "For you gladly suffer the foolish," and again, "Take me as one foolish," and also "I speak not according to God, but as it were in foolishness." Again in another place he says, "We are fools for Christ's sake." What great laudations of folly you have here listened to, and from what an eminent authority! Yea, and the same eminent authority openly enjoins folly as a thing especially necessary and entirely salutary. "If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." And in St. Luke's Gospel, Jesus calls two of His disciples, whom he had met on the way, fools. And this does not seem strange to me, since St. Paul

himself attributes something of folly to God also, when he says, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men." Origen, however, who comes forward as an interpreter on this, says, "You cannot refer this foolishness to the opinion of men, as you could that other saying, 'For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness.'" But why, being needlessly anxious, do I go on proving these things by so many examples?—when in the mystical psalms Christ himself openly says to the Father, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness." Nor is it without cause that fools are so greatly pleasing to God, for the reason, I suppose, that just as the greatest kings hold in suspicion and detestation those of their subjects who they felt were unduly observant, as Caesar regarded Brutus and Cassius, while he feared not at all the drunken Antony, and just as Nero regarded Seneca, and Dionysius looked askance at Plato; on the contrary, they are better pleased with grosser and simpler minds. In like manner Christ ever detests and disapproves of those wise ones who rely on their own sagacity. St. Paul testifies to this in no uncertain way when he says, "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen"; and when he says, "It pleased God, by the foolishness of our preaching, to save the world," since by wisdom it could not have been saved. Nay, Christ Himself shows this well enough when He exclaims by the mouth of the prophet, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject"; and again when He gives thanks because the Father had hidden the mystery of salvation from the wise, and had revealed it to little ones, that is, to fools. For in the Greek, νηπίοις, the word for "little ones," being opposed to σοφοῖς, then, if the latter signify "wise," the former means "foolish." In the same way here and there in the Gospel, He upbraided the Pharisees, the Scribes, and the Doctors of the Law, while He sedulously protected the unlearned multitude. For what else does "Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees" mean but "Woe to you wise ones"? But He seems to have been wonderfully delighted with children, women, and fishermen. . . . What else do all these examples proclaim to us, other than that all men are fools, even the godly, yea, even Christ himself, when He came to repair the folly of mortals, although He was the wisdom of the Father. Yet in a certain manner He became a fool when, having assumed our human nature, He "was in habit found as a man," just as He became sin in order to remedy our sins. Nor did He wish to remedy our sins in any other manner than by the foolishness of the cross, and through the ignorant and stupid Apostles, to whom He sedulously recommends folly, cautioning them against the effects of wisdom, by inviting them to behold the example of the little ones, the lilies of the field, the mustard seed, the sparrows that are sold for a farthing, and of such stupid things as these, which lack sense, and which act, not by intelligence, or by any foresight for the things of life, but only according to the instincts of their nature. . . .

And lest I go on indefinitely, and to sum up finally, it seems that the Christian religion has a relationship with folly in some way, and

is not at all consonant with wisdom. If you want evidence of this, consider first that children, old men, women, and idiots delight in ceremonies and religious rites beyond all others, and are always nearest the altars, impelled thereto by a strong impulse of nature. Next you observe that the earliest founders of our religion were men who had embraced a wonderful simplicity of life, and that they were most strenuous enemies of learning. Finally, no fools seem more foolish than all those whom the ardor of Christian piety has once seized hold of: they pour out their wealth, they pay no notice to affronts, they suffer themselves to be deceived, and make no distinction between friend and foe, they shun pleasures, but grow fat on hunger, watchings, griefs, toil and contumely; they feel a disgust for the things of the world, and long only for death; in short, they seem to have become benumbed as regards all common sense, just as if their soul dwelt elsewhere than in their body. What else indeed is this but madness? So we ought not to think it strange that the Apostles were doomed to be drunk with new wine, or that Paul was considered mad by Festus. . . . And since I have said thus much I will say more, namely, that the heaven of Christians which they seek to win with so much toil, is nothing else than a certain kind of madness and foolishness.[19]

[19] *Ibid.*, chaps. lix-lxvi.

CHAPTER XXII

ENGLAND: EFFECTS OF THE "MORIAE ENCOMIVM"

Fearing that our readers might have begun to deem us both mad and foolish had we transferred any more of this inconsequent and silly, not to say blasphemous, work to our pages, we have stopped at that point. These words seem strange when used in depreciation of any work of Erasmus; but a close perusal of the extracts here presented will convince anyone that Erasmus was not normal when he wrote it, and still less so when he published it. Remembering his caution in the preface of the book when addressing it to Sir Thomas More, that "perchance there will be fault-finders who will misrepresent the things I have written," we have deemed it only just to him to quote his exact words in the extracts given above. The greater part of the work was delicious raillery of men and things, and was written in the true satiric vein of Lucian, and without the truculence which so often spoils Juvenal. But when he comes to the monks, the Cardinals, and the Popes, the delicate shafts of his wit disappear, and we find instead only barbed weapons tipped with gall. The satiric weapon is a dangerous one, not only to the person satirized, but more especially to its wielder, inasmuch as the personal element may enter in and so distort his judgment. Another fact in connection with satirists is that a great many of them were saddened, disillusioned, and disappointed men, who railed at a world which they thought had injured them, or which had not appreciated them to their own satisfaction. Some of them were physically deformed, and others mentally unbalanced. For instance, Pope was a hunchback and sickly; Swift was mentally defective from his earliest years and ended his brilliant but erratic career by insanity, his end proving that his entire life had been abnormal; Byron was lame and a degenerate; Beranger's satire was rendered caustic by successive fines and imprisonment; Burns revenged himself on Scotch fanaticism, which bore too hard on his weakness for toddy, by consigning "Holy Willie" to eternal ridicule. William Cowper wrote some good satiric passages, but we know now that he was insane for the greater part of his days. Rabelais cannot be placed in this category, for we know nothing about when he was born, or how he died. George Saintsbury, in his admirable sketch of Rabelais which he wrote for the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* admits that this satirist had no plan or scope that is discernible to any reader, that he is outside of the limits of ordinary classification, and that his meaning often defies analysis. Could his brilliant inexplicability be the result of emotional insanity? We refer this question to the psychiatrists. Voltaire was one of a pair of puny twins, the other dying at birth, from which circumstances we need no

longer wonder that he was always physically weak and morally unstable, as he made very evident by hiring himself as a spy to Dubois. Pascal was precocious as a child, dyspeptic in young manhood, and finally a paralytic, the autopsy made after his death showing a serious lesion of the brain. Fielding wrote his satiric pages while suffering from the gout, and the disappointments of his life are common knowledge. Machiavelli, falling from wealth and position with the overthrow of the Florentine Republic, wrote satire when not engaged with his boon companions or occupied with his amours, according to J. Addington Symonds. Not to lengthen out this list unduly, Erasmus tells us the arch-satirist Ulric von Hutten was of a feeble constitution and delicate all his days, which did not prevent him from acquiring a loathsome disease, the result of his immorality. We have purposely omitted the three greatest satirists of all time, Aristophanes, Lucian, and Juvenal, for the sufficient reason that we know practically nothing about their private lives. As for Horace, all we know about him supports our theory. He was not morally brave and, when he did use satire, he took care that he did not offend the great, but singled out those only who would not, or could not, strike back. So we feel we are justified in saying that in many, perhaps in most instances, the satiric impulse springs from infirmity of mind or body, or both, engendering a bitterness of spirit which beclouds the judgment and destroys all sense of fairness in examining the actions or sayings of others.

Now, after speaking of satire and satirists in general, let us return to Erasmus and his *Praise of Folly*. After holding up to his readers' ridicule women, gluttons, backbiters, cuckolds, the vanity of actors, musicians, orators, artists, and doctors, of old men and old women, lawyers, savants, authors, and a multitude of others, he comes at last to the superstitious who believe in portents, spectres, imps, and ghosts. Belief in such things was common in the Middle Ages, and the castigation that it receives at the hands of Erasmus is well merited. But it is somewhat droll to see Erasmus commenting on such superstitions, when we know what stress he laid on good luck and bad luck, and his belief that he was born to be unlucky and that it could not be otherwise with him. He reproves those who gaze on the image of St. Christopher, or invoke the intercession of St. Barbara, expecting their prayer to be heard, but he forgets the while that, although he had the services of Dr. Cop in one of his own serious illnesses, he did not neglect to implore the help of St. Genevieve in addition.

But it is when he comes to the theologians that he carefully examines his sword and tests its edge, for he knows that here no false blow must be struck, not a single thrust miss its aim. And properly so, since we have already learned that he was no skilled theologian himself, as he intimated to Colet during his first visit to England. And we see no reason to question the accuracy of the surmise we made on a previous page, that one of the reasons why he did not seek a degree in theology at the University of Paris was his lack of confidence in his own theological acquirements. However, the many great things that he was may readily excuse this one thing that he was not, had he been content to

refrain from censuring the defects of those who were undoubtedly his superiors in this respect. When he proceeds to ridicule unmercifully their *notions, relations, quiddities,* and *tenuities,* their *conclusions, corollaries,* and other fine-spun distinctions, he does not lose our sympathy, for some of them most surely argued from the flimsiest premises and drew therefrom the most tenuous conclusions. We have no doubt that the question about how many angels might stand on the point of a needle was of interest to some of these theologasters, as he loved to call them; and that God could not cause two and two to make five may have had its fascinations for others as an arguable thesis is not an improbable supposition. But that the Schoolmen as a class spent their time in arguments of this sort is no longer entertained as a possibility by modern scholars.[1] We recognize that their aim was something far higher than this, and that as a class they are entitled to our respect for the uprightness and candor of their motives. What those motives were, Landerer, a Protestant writer, tells us very succintly:

> The problem which the Schoolmen undertook to solve was simply to give each dogma a rational substructure sufficient to elevate it from a mere matter of faith to a matter of science, and to form the whole mass of dogmas into a consistent and harmonious totality, a system. They were not *patres*: they were only *doctores*

[1] Professor E. K. Rand of Harvard University, speaking before the Mediaeval Academy of America recently, gave utterance to a few remarks on this very topic which are as true as they are appropriate here:

"... Even mediaeval theology has its plastic elements. Not that the goal was shifting—the conviction of the existence of ultimate theological truth made the quest of the seeker real and inspired his great attempt. But the ultimate and revealed truth of theology was one thing, and the human solution of the seeker another. His quest was permanent and not static. One gets curious notions sometimes about the philosophy of the Schoolmen, particularly from those who have not read a *tractatulus* of their writings, and who characterize the main object of scholastic thought as the calculation of the number of angels who could stand on the point of a pin—a *quæstio subtilis,* I venture to think, that can nowhere be found in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas or his confederates. ... Freedom of thought was not repressed in the Middle Ages. It was fostered by the allegorical method of interpretation, whereby the philosopher could connect his private theory with established truth. 'This, too, is what I mean,' he would say in the phrase of Mephistopheles, *'—nur mit ein Bischen anderen Worten.'* He was aware, likewise, that his instrument was human and fallible. He did not desire to be heretical, any more than a scholar to-day desires to be unscientific. He did his best, in his own way, with difficult problems, and if the result was not approved by authority, he retracted his solution or took his medicine, sometimes with a very wry cast of countenance.

"Abelard in the twelfth century, did not relish his perfectly proper condemnation at the Council of Soissons. In all of his theological writings, Abelard had been utterly free. He wrote a little work entitled *Sic et Non*—'Yes and No'—in which he had collected the very divergent views of the Fathers on a number of theological topics. In the charming preface to that work, he recalls that the boy Christ had not laid down the law to the doctors in the temple, but had asked and answered questions. *'Ask* and it shall be given you; *seek* and ye shall find; *knock* and it shall be opened unto you.' There is a growth of mediaeval thinking; read DeWulf. There are diverse schools of mighty thinkers, from John the Scot to St. Thomas Aquinas."

et magistri. The very name "scholasticism" shows the character of the movement.[2]

Whether they succeeded or failed need not delay us here: it is sufficient to know that they had a lofty motive and were deeply penetrated with the desire to further God's kingdom on earth. Medicine has had its charlatans in all ages, and Law its swindlers; it would be too much to expect that, human nature being what it is, Theology could escape entirely unsmirched. Now we do not utterly condemn either Law or Medicine on that account, nor shall we uphold Erasmus in his attempt to misrepresent a class such as the theologians simply because some of them spent their time splitting hairs. But after saying about them the most bitter things that he can think of at the moment, he provides himself with his usual loophole of escape from an untenable position by stating that "among these divines themselves there are some of the more learned who are offended to the soul by these frivolous subtleties . . . and consider it the height of impropriety to speak with an unclean mouth of things that are so sacred. . . ."[3]

And yet Erasmus, who speaks thus of others, seems not to be aware of his own blasphemy in calling Christ a fool, and we hope we may be pardoned for repeating his sacrilegious words: "What else do all these examples proclaim to us, other than that all men are fools, even the godly, yea, even Christ himself, when He came to repair the folly of mortals, although He was the wisdom of the Father?"[4]

And lest we may mistake his meaning, he goes on to speak of the foolishness of the crucifixion, and alludes to the stupid and ignorant Apostles, whom he represents the Savior as admonishing against the effects of wisdom. The whole episode is too blasphemous to bear repetition or comment, so we will pass on with the remark with which we opened this digression, and say again in all charity that Erasmus was not normal when he wrote it. Seneca somewhere says, "There has never been any great genius without a spice of madness"; and even before his day Aristotle had made the same observation.

A good many of the modern biographers of Erasmus, though we regret that Seebohm is not among them, have commented unfavorably on this phase of the *Praise of Folly.* Drummond says:

> The declamation concludes in truly orthodox style with a copious citation of Scriptural texts in commendation of Folly; and the free way in which Scripture is handled, and even the most sacred names introduced, while it certainly shows great want of taste, if not even of reverence, might reasonably have given offense to persons who were neither very superstitious nor very bigoted. The age, however, was one in which there was hardly any reverence and a great deal

[2] Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge.* Vol. III. Art. "Scholastic Theology."

[3] *Moriæ ecomium,* chap. liii.

[4] "Haec quid aliud clamitant, nisi mortaleis omneis stultos esse, etiam pios, ipsum quoque Christum? quo stultitiæ subueniret, cum esset sapientia Patris? (*Moriæ encomium,* chap. lxv.)

of superstition and bigotry. Yet Erasmus afterwards became sensible of this error, and acknowledged that he ought at least to have forborne from introducing the name of Christ in a humorous composition like the *Moria.*[5]

Feugère says:

> But his attack on the monks and theologians was particularly merciless. Under cover of an irony which to us does not always seem so sufficiently refined as not to offend good taste, it is easy to recognize that the hatred of Erasmus was intense against these two classes of men in whom he was eager to personify charlatanism and supercilious ignorance. . . . But he was not slow to feel in another way the effects of a satire which was at least imprudent. Old friends like Martin Dorp, a Doctor of Louvain, blamed him, entertaining an unfavorable idea of his religion, and reproached him for having attached asses' ears to the heads of theologians and jurists, at the very moment when they were manifesting for him a sincere admiration.[6]

Le Clerc says:

> One can hardly excuse Erasmus entirely for having put into the mouth of Folly some strokes which seem to confound religious truth with folly, and honest persons with idiots; but as the sentiments of this great man towards religion are well known and established from his other works, it is apparent that the spirit of declamation carried him rather too far.[7]

Pennington's comment is:

> He often accuses the Evangelists of lapses of memory, and I regret to say that a rationalistic spirit constantly appears in his writings. It is scarcely possible not to observe that the mind of Erasmus was essentially sceptical. He had doubts about almost everything except the existence of God, and the obligation of the moral law. . . . I have already observed that the sarcastic humor of Erasmus, even when directed against superstition, was often irreverent and unseasonable.[8]

De Burigni, who was an ardent admirer of Erasmus, felt obliged to admit that:

> Nothing contributed more to make mortal enemies for Erasmus than his declamations against the monks, who accused him not only of crying down their profession, but also of doing all in his power to abolish it. . . . It was a pious and reasonable wish to desire the reformation of the monks; but the disorders of a few furnished little reason to attack their profession, and Erasmus is all the more

[5] *Erasmus,* Vol. I, p. 200.
[6] *Étude sur Erasme,* p. 16.
[7] *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne,* Vol. VII, p. 216.
[8] *Life of Erasmus,* pp. 373, 374.

culpable in some of his invectives in that these are conformable neither to decency nor charity.[9]

In view of all these testimonies to the irreverent, indecent, and blasphemous manner in which Erasmus at times, but especially in the *Praise of Folly,* treated things which the world has always been wont to speak of with at least respect, we cannot agree with Drummond, whose biography of Erasmus is otherwise very judicious, when he says: "Never, even in his most galling exposures of superstition, does he forget what is due to real religion." [10]

But, laying aside his irreverence for sacred things, let us deal with his hostility to the monks. Remembering the reason which we have alleged for his fear of all monks, and his ardent desire to destroy that institution if he could, we need not be surprised at anything he says on that topic. But this is to be noted, that the thought of his own inconsistency seems never to have entered his head when he was writing of monkish ignorance and superstititon. He appears to have forgotten that some of his best friends during every period of his life were monks. Let us give only a few of them—Theodoric, Cornelius Gerard, William Herman, Gaguin, Werner, Mauburn, Charnock, Boschius, Whitford, Antony of Bergen, Bacellius, Harenacius, Brielis, Kühn, Man, Ellenbogen, Gregory; the three priors of Freiburg, St. Agnes, and Berg; Berselius, John of Louvain, Vitrarius, Emsted, Egidius of Viterbo, and Fra Urbano Bolzanio of Belluno—whose names at present occur to us. A similar list might be made up from his enemies, and all these friends and foes, though they were monks, were among the leading scholars of Europe.

Martin Dorp, a Doctor of Theology at Louvain, has summed up for us in an admirable letter the reasons for the condemnation of *The Praise of Folly.* As a friend and admirer of his great fellow-countryman, he was as gentle in his criticisms as it was possible to be:

> Do not believe, dear Erasmus, for that name is now so synonymous with learning and excellence that nothing need be added thereto—do not believe, I say, that there is any one of the friends of whom you have many, on account of your varied erudition and notable uprightness of character, scattered though they be almost everywhere where Christianity has spread, who regards you with more sincere affection than I, who was on such terms of intimacy with you in the days gone by; and then even when you were here recently, almost the only one to be most cordially invited to meet you; and lastly, what I deem of the most importance, your fellow-countryman, not to say, admirer of your genius and a herald of your fame beyond all others. So now what I am going to write to you with some freedom, pray believe, proceeds from a heart that is most devoted to you, and considering only your name and honor. Now I think it is important that you should know what the men here think of you in your absence.

[9] *Vie d'Érasme,* Vol. II, pp. 524, 525. [10] *Op. cit.,* Vol. II, p. 348.

Know then, in the first place, that your *Praise of Folly* has caused much disturbance everywhere, even amongst those who have long been most zealous for your fame. For who does not feel a candid regard for that mind of yours which Poetry, Philosophy, and Theology have selected as their most favorable abode? Yet there have been many, and are now many, who make grave excuses for that work, while those who praise it in every respect are very few indeed. "What is this," they say, "but madness, even if what he wrote were most true, fatiguing himself as he does for nothing else but the arousing of animosities?" Is it not foolish, even if your allegory were the best possible, when no one can read it without being offended, and most people become indignant at it? How has it benefited the ranks of the theologians, whom it especially behooves us not to expose to the contempt of the public; nay, how much is it going to harm them to be so fiercely reviled, if we ourselves are going to furnish material about some of them? Moreover, will pious ears endure to hear Christ and His holy life spoken of as nothing but a crazy notion? And it is not only because it is false that the scandal arises, but it may be an occasion of stumbling to feeble brethren, for whom, just as much as for great scholars, Christ gave up his life. Many such things have been condemned in several of the Councils, even though they were undoubtedly true in many respects; and Gerson, a distinguished doctor, affirms this to be true of the Council of Constance. Now it would be wearisome to tell you how I have answered these things, for I have never kept silent, nor have I ceased to animadvert on what is said about this affair of yours, not only by the ignorant though far from vicious ones, but also what the vilest of them would utter, where it was possible for me to refute it either publicly through the efforts of my friends, or through the letters which you sent me in your absence.

Please do not have recourse to "What does it matter to me what these uneducated praters and barbarians howl about so offensively? It is enough for me to know that myself and my work are approved by a few learned men, even though they are outnumbered by those who condemn me." But what should prevent the illiterate, for I will not call them barbarous, from admiring, praising, and extolling your erudition to the skies, as they have hitherto so earnestly done? Then again, how much will you gain, or rather, how much will you lose, if these same people, becoming offended, demand a recantation and have recourse to calumny and detraction, endeavoring in their hostility towards you to diminish your reputation with all their power? Tart witticisms, even when they contain a good deal of truth, leave a bitter memory behind. Formerly everybody used to admire you and read your works; the highest theologians and jurisconsults longed to meet you; and behold, of a sudden, this unlucky *Praise of Folly,* like Davus, upsets everything. They praise your style, your invention, and your acumen; but not even the learned approve of your scoffings. And indeed, my most learned Erasmus, I cannot in the least understand why in this matter you

would wish to please only scholarly people. Is it not better to be praised than blamed, even by rustics? Does it not please us when even little dogs give us a flattering wag of the tail as a sign of friendship? Now, to be good and do right depend on yourself; that others may think well of you or indeed speak ill of you is not in your power to control. And so, after the example of Christ, you despise the Pharisees as malevolent, blind, and leaders of the blind. Oh yes, I understand, Erasmus, dearest of all my friends, but they who condemn and dislike your work do it from weakness, not from malice, unless you deem that not even philosophy and the Sacred Scriptures can make such people good without the study of the learned arts. They act from an opportunity furnished not alone by themselves, but also by you, it appears; and you were not obliged to furnish it. "But what shall I do about it?" you will say. "What is once done cannot be undone. I am willing to act differently, and I want all those who have ever been friendly to remain so still." O dearest Erasmus, if you could only be persuaded by me to think and speak that way in this affair! The way to accomplish this will not be difficult to you, and it would not be becoming in me to attempt to tell you how. But I fully expect that you could accomplish the whole thing by writing and publishing against your *Praise of Folly* a *Praise of Wisdom.* Such a subject is prolific, worthy of your genius and your learning, and will be most acceptable to everybody. Moreover, it will win for you more favor, friendliness, reputation, and, I might say, emolument, although that you despise, than this unlucky *Praise of Folly* seems to have won for you. Such is my advice, which whether you accept or reject, I am of a surety, and ever shall be, yours . . .etc.[11]

This appeal attracts us by its evident sincerity, and it would have been well for Erasmus had he yielded to his friend's entreaties, since the publication of the *Praise of Folly* was the beginning of a host of troubles which harassed him for the rest of his life. Even his great admirer De Burigni says:

It is true that in examining this work rigorously it is difficult to justify it entirely. We find propositions advanced indiscreetly, and Erasmus himself has acknowledged that he spoke too freely, that he ought not to have introduced Jesus Christ therein, and that he would have done better to have employed the Sacred Scriptures in a more serious manner than he did in this work. . . . [The work] was translated into all sorts of languages. Halluin got out one in French during 1517. Erasmus was very displeased with this translation, for he asserts in a letter to Lystrius that the translator made him say things of which he had never thought, that he had omitted much that he did not understand, and that he had badly rendered many passages. This translation did much harm to Erasmus. Now that everybody could read the book, the theologians and the monks who were turned into ridicule in its pages cried out that it was scandal-

[11] Eras. Ep. 304.

ous, and publicly asserted that the *Praise of Folly* was the most dangerous thing that had ever been done against religion. . . . It is evident that if the work made a great reputation for Erasmus, it also did him great damage in the estimation of many people, who, as Floridus Sabinus remarks, began from the date of its publication to have an unfavorable idea of his religious sincerity.[12]

We do not pretend to say what was the effect of the *Praise of Folly* on Luther; but we can draw very enlightening conclusions on the point from a remark that Luther let drop some time afterwards when talking to some of his intimate friends: "Erasmus is the enemy of true religion, the open adversary of Christ, the complete and faithful picture and image of Epicurus and Lucian." [13]

But to return to the Dorp letter. This appeal required an answer, for Erasmus could not afford to offend the entire faculty of the University of Louvain, of which Dorp was one of the professors. We can easily see that the position was difficult, but Erasmus had freed himself from much more precarious ones and did not fear the result of the present unpleasantness. Moreover, he was dealing with an admirer who had only to be skilfully handled and the matter would be easily smoothed over. So he tried to flatter Dorp's self-esteem by telling him of the extreme pleasure that he had derived from the perusal of his letter, artfully insinuating that he had the greatest respect for his opinion,

because you advise me so sincerely, admonish me so amiably, and reproach me so lovingly. . . . Every day many learned men in their letters call me the *Glory of Germany, its Sun, and its Moon,* and load me down with the most splendid titles, which are more burdensome than honorable. But may I die, if any one of these adulatory letters ever pleased me half so much as the scolding letter of my dear Dorp. . . . I most earnestly desire that anything I write shall meet the approbation of a man like you, whose almost heavenly genius, whose marvelous erudition, whose most accurate judgment, I so value that I would prefer the praise of one Dorp to that of a thousand other men.[14]

This ought to have lifted Dorp off his feet, coming from a man of the reputation of Erasmus. Then he proceeds to tell him by implication that he must be mistaken in his estimate of the book:

For it is a sufficient proof of how displeasing it was to everyone that, within a few months and in different places, it has been printed more than seven times. I myself marvel what there can be in the thing to please anybody. So if you call it silly, my dear Dorp, you have the criminal admitting the fact, or at least, not denying it. It was in this way, and for the sake of passing the time, that I yielded to my friends and thus played the fool; but it is the only time in my life that I have ever done so. But who can be wise at all times? You yourself allow that my other writings are of such a character

[12] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 205, 197, 199.
[13] Luther's *Table-Talk*, p. 680, Bohn.
[14] Eras. Ep. 337.

> that they are greatly approved by all pious and learned men. Who are these excessively rigid censors, or rather Areopagites, who are unwilling to forgive a man his one foolish lapse? What wonderful fastidiousnes is this that, being offended by one silly little book, would thereupon deprive its writer of the benefits of his former literary labors? [15]

This is sufficient to satisfy even the most atrabilious of his critics; but he did not stop here. Just as he gave Pope Julius both sides on the subject of war, so now he proceeded to show Dorp the other side of this question, and spent twelve days in writing the document. He said that he was almost sorry for having written the *Praise of Folly,* because it had raised up for him a host of enemies. He claimed that his object had been to give counsel and advice, to work for the betterment of morality, and that he had only those theologians in view who were unworthy of the name. Then he goes on to intimate that some of the better class of divines rather liked being satirized, for, since the publication of the work, many of those whose lives were exemplary and whose learning was profound had treated him very cordially. After saying in one passage that his aim was to advise and counsel and thus improve the morals of his readers, he shortly thereafter says that his enemies do him wrong in supposing that he is speaking seriously, when the thing was but a jest; and they forget that it is Folly and not himself that is speaking.

We can imagine the bewilderment of Dorp on receiving this lengthy epistle, not knowing whether he held in his hand an apology for the *Praise of Folly* or a veiled attempt to make him ridiculous without his perceiving the fact. But if such was the intention of Erasmus it did not succeed, for Dorp returned to the attack in such a way as to show that he clearly understood Erasmus' bit of sophistry. But he was a very manly opponent, and never forgot the respect and courtesy that were due to Erasmus' superior age and standing. In writing to More later, Erasmus assumed to regard Dorp as the tool and mouthpiece of the theologians at Louvain; but a close investigation of the whole matter does not bear him out in his suspicion, and we prefer to regard Dorp as representing the thoughtful and considered intellectual attitude of that university towards Erasmus and the *Praise of Folly.* Many of the faculty besides Dorp and Desmarais were his intimate friends, but to be criticized even by them made him furious. To More, Tunstall, and Ammonius he unbosomed himself on this subject, and did not conceal from them how bitterly chagrined he was. More, in his capacity of godfather to the *Praise of Folly,* wrote an epistle to Dorp deprecating his animadversions on the work; Tunstall expressed his regret that such had been found necessary; while Ammonius advised Erasmus to consign Dorp and the whole business to the devil. But that was not an easy task, for in his heart Erasmus knew that Dorp and those who viewed the matter similarly were absolutely right. He told Dorp in so many words that he was almost sorry for having written it.[16] Later he even went further, for, after admitting that the book had exposed him to much censure, he adds

[15] *Idem.*

[16] *Idem.*

that he would not have composed a work so frivolous on subjects which in the issue proved so serious, if he had foreseen the troubles with which the Church was soon to be afflicted. He was always precipitate to a fault; and in many places registers his regret therefor.[17] And afterwards, when Erasmus issued his edition of the New Testament, Dorp saw all his fears realized and his friend forced to battle with the many enemies that his own unwisdom had made for him. But Dorp did not on that account reproach him for not having taken his advice; but, when he saw Erasmus reaping the results of his folly, he kept silent, a line of conduct and discretion which Erasmus appreciated as showing the real affection which Dorp had always entertained for him. And this is the real explanation of the fact that on the death of Dorp in 1525 Erasmus was truly grieved, and expressed his feelings towards him in a touching epitaph.

Christopher Longueil or Longolius of Mechlin also censured the *Praise of Folly,* without Dorp's discretion, which made Erasmus so vindictive that, even after Longueil's death, he did not hesitate to undermine his character and reputation in a letter to Alciati.[18] He was really callous to all criticism which he saw would not harm him either in his pocket or his prospects; but when his own interests were imperiled he was at once alarmed. He wrote immediately to Antony of Luxemburg, the secretary of the Abbot of St. Bertin, when he heard that the Abbot was disgusted with the *Praise of Folly.* The Abbot had been very generous to him, so he could not afford, he reflected, to displease him. He therefore dropped the following explanation into the secretary's ear, to be repeated, we assume, to the Abbot when occasion might serve:

> I hear that the Abbot is somewhat angry with me because, I suppose, somebody told him that I had turned the monks into ridicule in the *Praise of Folly.* Still I do not credit what I hear about this, because I know the prudence of the man. The argument of the book was ludicrous, serious matters were not intended, and withal, nothing hateful was said about the monks. The work did not offend the Pope, who read it from beginning to end, and approved the ingenuity of the author.[19]

However, he furnished his own refutation of these statements in another letter which he wrote to George Halluin, whom we have already mentioned as having translated the work into the French language:

> Unless I am much mistaken, I have at last got on the scent of that person at Ghent whom my *Praise of Folly* offended. He is a monk, he wears a black habit, and he is all stomach. At first the book was understood by only a few, until Lystrius added his commentary; but, when it began to speak in French by your efforts, it was also understood by those who do not understand their psalms.[20]

[17] A constantly repeated phrase was *non putaram.* Confer, for example, Eras. Ep. I, p. 3, l. 6; 269, l. 29; 644; 1161; 1202, l. 231; 1219, l. 51; 1329, l. 27; 1418, l. 37; 1479, l. 56; also LB: col. 1440F; 1486D.

[18] Eras. Ep. (H) p. 836. [19] Eras. Ep. 673. [20] *Ibid.,* 641.

This flippant and biting remark about those who do not understand their psalms refers of course to the monks, and it was just this flippancy of his that was turning the monks against him. If we are not willing to concede that the fling is unjust, we may at least acknowledge that it is ungenerous. As for what he says about the Pope's approval of the *Praise of Folly,* we are not to take that seriously at this late day. It served his purpose for the time being, but it has no historical basis and, in the nature of things, never could have had any. And the reason for this is plain, for had the Pope pronounced on the *Moria* as Erasmus states, nothing could have prevented him from making use of the circumstance when he was being so fiercely attacked by the monks. He would have given day and date, with all the attendant facts, the names of those present, and the occasion for the Pope's manifesting his approval of this most astounding work in which he himself was held up to ridicule. This would have been not only the greatest defense for his *Praise of Folly* that had so upset the monks, but it would have been the only one needed, for it would have squelched them completely. But evidently he could not do this, for he was already on record as stating that the Popes were afraid of the Religious Orders, and he could perceive the inconsistency. Moreover, none knew better than he that his unlucky book was ill calculated to make any one in Rome laugh or feel flattered. Not the Cardinals at any rate, not Sadoleti, not Gigli who had procured him his dispensation, not the Della Rovere family who had done him so many favors, not Grimani, nor Riario, nor any of those whose names will occur to the reader. And there is no letter extant to our knowledge in which any Roman official, from the Pope down, has left a record of the slightest approval for that work. But it was safe enough in an indirect way to convey to his good old patron the Abbot of St. Bertin, mightily offended at the contemptuous way in which his brethren had been treated in this much discussed book, that the thing was only a joke at which even the Pope had smiled.

Another dear friend of his own felt constrained to remonstrate with him very gently, as a father would with a brilliant but wayward son. This was a monk whom he addresses as Father John of Louvain, whose letter on the subject he destroyed—as he did most of the unpleasant ones—but the tenor of which we can glean from his reply:

> Most upright father, I hope you are well. I could not but welcome your friendly, your prudent, and in a word, your Christian admonition. I have rendered satisfaction to the reader of the *Praise of Folly,* partly in the preface of the work itself, and partly in a letter to Dorp, which is now added to that work. What shall I do for those who can be placated by no reasoning whatever, nay, who, with a great outcry, damn what they have never read? For none cry out more unreasonably than these. If I had known beforehand that such as these would have been so greatly offended, perhaps I would have taken measures to suppress the book, for I am so constituted that, if I can, I very much wish to please everybody, so far as I can do so without flattery. Now I am sorry in vain, since the

book has been printed more than twelve times. But what I wonder at is why only the monks and the theologians are offended. Do not all people recognize them to be such as I there describe them? The Supreme Pontiff read the *Praise of Folly* through and laughed at it; adding only this: "I rejoice," he said, "that our friend Erasmus is also in the *Folly*," and yet there is none that I treat more harshly than the Popes. Far be it from me to lend myself to detraction. But if I had desired to describe monks and theologians just as many of them are, then indeed it would appear that *Folly* had spoken of them very civilly indeed.

I had never heard before this that the book was read in the schools. And yet I had taken care that there should be nothing in it that might infect the young. Now, as to your fear that by the reading of it these might be alienated from all religion, I do not well understand what you mean. Is there straightway danger that all religion will displease if anything be said against superstitious members of the religious orders? Ah, would that all who are nowadays styled *religious* were worthy of the name! Nay, I will speak more freely, would that the secular clergy themselves and the promiscuous multitude would so follow the real religion of Christ that these who are now called the only *religious* would not appear religious! The world everywhere is full of monasteries. And although I do not condemn any mode of life, yet take away the very few of them that have anything of true religion in them, except ritual and ceremonies, and the rest play a more than worldly part. So far I have blackened the reputation of no man, but have jested with the common vices of mortals and those best known to us all.

Still, in my other writings I will act more moderately hereafter. But if it should turn out that I cannot satisfy some of these people, I will console myself with the example of Paul, who through good and evil report followed that which was right. This I will certainly achieve, that if I am not approved by all, I will surely be approved by the best and greatest; and perhaps these will praise me dead who slandered me while living. Farewell, dearest Father, and commend me to Christ in your prayers. Louvain, January 2, 1518.[21]

Father John, to whom this epistle was addressed, was the Prior of the Franciscan monastery at Amsterdam. He was of Louvain and, presumably, of its University, hence both a monk and a theologian. It is to be regretted that Erasmus did not give us Father John's letter, for then we should be in a better position to judge the merits of both sides. But, as we have previously noted, he seems to have made it a point to suppress all such letters, which makes his own testimony rather *ex parte*. It would seem that in spite of the fact that the *Praise of Folly* had been printed several times, its circulation was not yet general, or Father John would have written him before 1518. The letter itself is a splendid example of Erasmus' consummate skill in putting the world in the wrong. He begins by kissing the rod that is to chasten him; proceeds then to show that he is innocent and that the monks and theologians

[21] *Ibid.*, 749.

got less from him than they deserved anyway; then says that he is almost sorry that he wrote it, but adroitly adds that it made the Pope laugh; startles the simple Prior with the news that the book has been printed already twelve times and hence, by inference, cannot be what the Prior thinks it to be, a bad and irreligious work; and finally, with a touch of Christian resignation, alleges that they will miss him when he is gone. The poor old monk's brain must have been in a whirl when he got to the end of this remarkable epistle. He knew that he and all men of his cloth had been held up to the ridicule of the thoughtless and ungodly; but that touch about the book making the Pope laugh was certainly a masterstroke. How could he continue to harbor rancor against such a man as Erasmus, and against such a book as the *Praise of Folly* that was so esteemed in high Church circles? And though he may have had his doubts about the latter fact, how could he convict Erasmus of trying to throw dust in his eyes? So Father John subsided, not quite sure that his judgment was good under the circumstances.

Erasmus was skilful in this style of literary fencing and could very successfully entangle in his verbose and devious ratiocinations the less wary of his antagonists; but when an opponent of the first magnitude appeared in the arena, such as Lee, Luther, Hutten, or the Prince of Carpi, he had to adopt different tactics and, throwing aside the weapons of verbiage, make use of the direct thrust and parry methods, at which he often found others as skilful as himself.

Before we take final leave of the *Praise of Folly* and the attacks on the monks and divines that figure so largely therein, we may gain some light on this vexed subject by comparing Erasmus' attitude towards them with that taken by Luther. They were both monks—contemporaries—and had dwelt in monasteries not very far apart. Luther had equal or better opportunities of judging his brethren than Erasmus; he had occupied a position of trust and responsibility in the Order; he had been sent to Rome on a mission of importance, and had acquitted himself of the task successfully; he had submitted to the discipline and the humiliations which the rules of the Order required in the way of advancing along the road of Christian perfection; and he had bent his proud neck to the yoke without a murmur. There had been no whimpering, no attempt to evade the formalities and duties which the life demanded, and whatever crosses he was called upon to bear, he bore in a manly and dignified fashion. The time came when he abandoned his brethren and left his Order, but it was not from any discontent with the monastic way of life; and had not the subject of the Indulgences arisen, it is probable that he would have lived and died a true monk. Luther, no doubt, had seen and known bad monks, but that had not deterred him from taking the habit; for he had a large insight into human nature and knew that human weakness, and not the monastic life, made bad monks; and that those who fell away did so in spite of, and not because of, their profession. And, as a consequence, we find Luther's writings remarkably free from hostile criticism of monasticism. And as it was with Luther, so it was with almost all those who left the monastic Orders and embraced the new doctrines.

CHAPTER XXIII

ENGLAND: AT CAMBRIDGE: CORRESPONDENCE WITH COLET

As we have seen, Erasmus returned to England from Italy about the early part of the autumn of 1509, and lodged for a short time with his friend Thomas More in the latter's house at Bucklersbury. In the absence of all letters to or from him for almost the whole of the next two years, we are left entirely in the dark as to his movements and activities. It would appear, however, that he and his friend Andreas Ammonius, of whom we have previously made mention, went into hired lodgings, and to some extent Erasmus thereby realized the dream of his youth, which was to live together with some choice literary spirit with whom he might share his thoughts and aspirations. Batt was to have filled that enviable relation towards him, but the early death of that faithful and self-sacrificing friend frustrated the plan. In Ammonius he seems to have found another Batt; and that they lived together in mutually helpful relationship is testified to by Ammonius in his letter to Erasmus, when the latter was in Paris subsequently, in which he informs him that because the fact of their living together had become so well known, everybody came to him to learn the news and the whereabouts of Erasmus.[1] It is very probable that Ammonius owed his position as Latin secretary of Lord Mountjoy to the favor and recommendation of Erasmus, exerted for him previous to the latter's leaving for his journey to Italy. In any case, their interests seem to have been mutual and their friendship lasting. It was at this exact moment, while he was waiting for his books and other impedimenta which he had taken with him on his trip, and which had not yet been delivered to him, that he began the *Praise of Folly,* which he states he finished in a week. Some rough draft certainly he wrote and read to his friends assembled in More's house; but that he wrote the work just as we now have it in that short time is not credible. It does not bear the marks of hasty composition, and is moreover filled with the most recondite allusions of every kind, the verification of which alone would consume more time than he alleges the whole work took. Moreover, he was suffering from a complication of bladder trouble and seasickness; and, while we might properly expect that such a condition of health might easily be reflected in the matter of the work, it surely would not lend itself to such wonderful celerity in its composition. It seems more probable that it was a leisurely task which he had set himself, and that it was done in the intervals which he could snatch from attendance on his numerous friends and benefactors. His Italian journey had without doubt exhausted his funds, and we may safely

[1] Eras. Ep. 221.

assume that his sole business for the present was to replenish his purse. For this purpose he had perforce to pay court to his former patrons, Mountjoy, Archbishop Warham, Bishop Fisher, More, and Colet. Mountjoy never failed him, but perhaps he was willing that others should share the burden. And it was no small burden, for, though Erasmus was not a sybarite, yet he loved his comfort, and required and even insisted on the best service and attendance. Mountjoy had told him in a letter which he had received while still in Italy, that Archbishop Warham had promised him a benefice if he returned to England. Now he had returned and was anxiously looking forward to the fulfilment of that promise. But benefices did not fall out every day, and so he was obliged to wait for that event. His hopes of assistance from the Bishop of Rochester were also flattering but, unfortunately, not immediate. The Bishop was, in his office of Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, endeavoring at the instance of Lady Margaret Tudor to establish some professorships of divinity there, one of which he had offered to Erasmus. But this was not available for some time to come, and meanwhile he must live. Whether they severally and singly gave him small gifts from time to time, or whether Ammonius for a period defrayed the expenses of their common household, we are unable to ascertain, but it is possible that he was tided over this critical time in both these ways. Aid from the new king failed to materialize entirely, for the reason probably that Henry had much more serious things to think about on his accession to the throne than subsidizing literary men, be they ever so scholarly. Such leisure as Erasmus could command from these necessary pursuits we may be sure that he put to good use. The present writer feels that it was during the period of anxious waiting for something to fall out that he really began his work on the translation of the New Testament. He was again in touch with Colet and under the influence of his earnest and zealous spirituality. To Colet he was a man of tremendous literary energy, which he was frittering away in trifles like the *Praise of Folly;* and we look in vain for one commendatory word from him for that inauspicious work. Colet did not then have much time to devote to Erasmus, for he was engaged in the task of establishing his new school at St. Paul's, to the founding of which he had devoted his life and fortune. Such a wonderful example of loving devotion to the education of youth as Colet was then furnishing to the world could not fail to be observed by Erasmus; and to his knowledge of the aims and motives of Colet we owe the thoughtful and discriminating sketch of him which he afterwards published in connection with a similar essay on Vitrarius. His companionship with Ammonius must have been delightful. Here was a man who could write and speak Latin and Greek as well as himself, and who had refined and literary instincts. Like the rest of us, he had felt in his youth the divine *afflatus* and had succumbed to the extent of writing some verses of considerable merit, which he had no desire to conceal from a world that he felt was anxious to see and enjoy them. Erasmus, too, had not yet mustered up courage sufficient to commit his *Praise of Folly* to cold type; but at

last he went to Paris, his manuscript in one pocket and the poems of Ammonius in the other, with the fixed intention of securing a publisher for each. While waiting at Dover to get passage across the Channel, he visited Mountjoy and showed him Ammonius' poems, informing him of their impending publication and of the author's desire to dedicate them to himself. Mountjoy read the dedication and, finding it too fulsome, pruned its extravagance considerably, to such an extent indeed that Erasmus advised Ammonius to write a new preface. This was done and the work was eventually printed by Jodocus Badius. This suggests a question. Why did not Badius also print the *Praise of Folly?* Could it be that he thought it unfit and unworthy of Erasmus? Badius himself was a voluminous writer and a man of great literary ability. Trithemius, as quoted by De Burigni, assures us that Badius was a writer of rare merit, equally well versed in belles-lettres and the sacred writings, and that he was also a philosopher, orator, and poet, besides being famous for his wit and eloquence. Even Erasmus had such regard for his ability that he once drew a parallel between him and Budé, probably the greatest scholar that France at that time possessed. Badius, like Dorp, was a fellow-countryman of Erasmus, and doubtless counseled him against anything that might imperil his hitherto well-merited reputation. But if he did, it availed not, for the *Praise of Folly* was brought out by a rival printer.[2]

While in Paris on this business, Erasmus wrote two letters to his friend Ammonius, in one of which he especially wished to have his kind regards conveyed to Thomas Ruthall, at this time Bishop of Durham and secretary to Henry VIII. Whether or not he was already receiving help from Ruthall, this bishop, by virtue of his position with the king, was certainly a man of great influence, and hence to be cultivated. These two letters from Paris are the only signs of life we have from Erasmus from his arrival in England in the autumn of 1509 until April, 1511. On his regaining England again after his expedition to Paris for the printing of the *Praise of Folly* and the poems of Ammonius, he made for London, where he fell sick of the sweating sickness, as the pest was then called, and narrowly escaped dying. Indeed, a rumor of his death had spread far and wide and had even reached the ears of Bombace at Bologna. But he recovered, and when next we hear of him he is installed at Queen's College, Cambridge, probably on the invitation of Bishop Fisher, who was still Chancellor, though no longer President, of Queen's. From there he wrote a letter, half whimsical, half serious, to Colet, telling him about his trip and what he was now doing.

> If my misfortunes could move you to laughter, dear Colet, there is plenty for you to laugh at. In addition to what happened to

[2] We must agree with Allen rather than with Nichols in assuming that it was Badius and not Croke that Ammonius meant by the term πολυγράφον; and by τὸ συμβόλαιον οὐδαμῶς τηρεῖν παράγγελλε at the end of his letter to Erasmus, it seems to me that he meant to convey, "Tell him not to be anxious at all about his reimbursement"—in view of the fact that Badius was publishing Ammonius' book of poems. (See Eras. Ep. 221.)

me in London, my servant's horse went dead lame, for the hostler had swapped the animal that Bullock had sent me; besides which, we could find nothing to eat anywhere along the way. On the following day it rained continually till dinner time; after dinner it lightened, thundered, and hailed, and three times that horse fell head foremost. Bullock said that he perceived Jove was angry. Things please me here now, for I behold the appearances of Christian poverty. I do not expect any salary at all, since I understand that here merely what I may be able to drag out of my patrons will be lavished on me.

There is here a doctor, a countryman of my own, who accomplishes marvelous things by means of a quintessence, making young men out of the aged, and living men from the dead. Hence there is some hope that I may regain my youth, providing that I can only taste a drop of the quintessence, in which event, I will not regret entirely my coming here. But of financial return I see not a trace; for how can I get money out of those who have it not, being honest but unlucky? Farewell, best of preceptors. When I have begun to play the professor, I will inform you how the thing goes, so that you may have more to laugh at. Queen's College, Cambridge, St. Bartholomew's Day.

Perhaps I will attempt your St. Paul. Behold the audacity of your Erasmus. Again farewell. 1511.[3]

The following day he wrote to his friend Ammonius, telling him that he had not given the students much of a taste of his quality, for the reason that he had not yet quite recovered from his illness. Incidentally he begs him to send him a cask of Greek wine, as the Cambridge beer did not agree with him, nor were its wines much better. In the following month he replied to a letter of Colet's which has not come down to us, but the contents of which his answer makes clear:

I have not yet met anyone who would be a suitable teacher for your school, but I will continue to inquire and, as soon as I shall find one, I will inform you. . . . I am making a little fight in your behalf with the Thomists and Scotists who are here; but of this I will tell you when I see you. I have begun to translate Basil on Isaiah, and the work pleases me greatly. I will show a little of it to the Bishop of Rochester, and thus find out if he wishes to sweeten my labors with a little present. Oh, this begging! I know you are laughing at me. And indeed I hate myself; and the end of the matter will be that I must either fall into some good fortune which will relieve me from this pitiful begging, or I must henceforward imitate Diogenes. . . . Farewell. If you have any money in hand entrusted to you for charitable purposes, pray, send a few nobles to Richard Croke, a former servant and pupil of Grocyn, who is now studying classical literature at Paris. He is a youth of good prospects, on whom a favor will be well bestowed, unless

[3] Eras. Ep. 225.

my judgment misleads me. Again farewell, my dearest preceptor. Cambridge, 1511.[4]

To this letter Colet made rather a curious answer, hinting broadly that to a man so badly off as Erasmus, the position of teacher in the new St. Paul's school would be a good thing for the school at least.

Why shall I not approve? thus you write. What is there of Erasmus that I do not approve? I read your letter on the subject of study somewhat hastily, since I was too busy to read it carefully. In the reading of it not only do I approve of it all, but I admire your genius, your art, your skill, your copiousness, and your eloquence. I have often wished that the boys of my school were instructed in this manner, just as you have described it. Often, too, have I wished that our teachers were such as you have so wisely depicted. When I came to that place at the end of your letter, where you insist that you could bring our youth to a fair speaking knowledge of both languages in less time than these smatterers of ours can bring them to a stammering utterance of them, oh, Erasmus, how I then wished that you were a teacher in my school. But I have some hope that you will bring us some assistance even in the matter of instructing our teachers when you return from those Cambridge friends of yours. . . . You will do well, I think, and be acting for your own best interests, if you imitate Diogenes, and, taking pleasure in poverty, consider yourself the king of kings. Perhaps by your despising money, both money and good luck will follow you. Among Christian men the world follows those who shun it. Whence come the wealth and riches of the Church if not from shunning them? But I am aware such paradoxes are not pleasing to you.

I am surprised at your writing to me about Richard Croke. What have I to do with other people's money? Why should you suspect or imagine that I have moneys in hand entrusted to me in any way? I do not stand by the bedsides of people about to die, nor flatter rich widows. I do not meddle with rich men's wills, nor seek the friendship of the wealthy. I do not praise their ill deeds, nor bid them to obtain pardon for their sins by placing sums of money at my disposal. Believe me, in this country, a man who is not of that sort will not easily obtain money to be disposed of in charity. I handle only my own money, and what I do with that, you know. But I am smiling at your innate simplicity, Erasmus, and at the same time charmed that, in this odious begging habit of yours, you have pleaded the cause of others rather than your own. The sum and substance of the matter is, that, though I have no money belonging to other people to bestow on strangers, yet if you will beg humbly, I have some of my own means to share with you, and if you beg for it without shame, my poverty will assist your poverty in a most moderate way. Farewell, and I pray you write to me often. London, September, 1511.[5]

[4] *Ibid.*, 227.

[5] *Ibid.*, 230.

This reply of Colet to Erasmus' request for money to be sent to Croke at Paris may seem harsh at first glance, but a little reflection will perhaps show us that Colet had discovered in the request a little bit of indirectness on the part of Erasmus that displeased him. This sudden interest in Croke, when he himself was so pinched for money, is hardly natural. He was having the *Praise of Folly* printed at Paris, and very possibly had made some financial promises to the printer. Croke, whom he had left in Paris to see the work through the press, was probably writing for money to satisfy the printer's demands; and if Colet were to send Croke any aid, part of it at least might be diverted in that direction. Now, if any inkling of this had reached Colet, as is probable, we should expect him, or any other man in similar circumstances, to write just such a reply. It was certainly a severe rebuke, though probably warranted by the occasion. Colet may have regarded him in a different light from ours. He was not yet the Erasmus that we know; and beyond his *Adages* his claims to fame were still in the future. So if Colet looked upon him as a very bright man, but with the habits and instincts of a sturdy beggar, we must not be surprised.

But there is another phase of the matter that is worthy of consideration. Colet's cutting remark that he was not accustomed to stand at the bedside of dying men, nor was it his wont to flatter rich widows, must have made Erasmus wince; and when he also referred to the fact that he was not the sort to meddle with rich men's wills, and bid them to seek pardon for their sins by placing money in his hands to be disposed of in charity, Erasmus must have been conscious that in an unguarded moment he had regaled Colet with the substance of what he had written in his famous colloquy of the *Funeral,* which as far as we know had not yet been committed to print. But if the reader will take the trouble to read that famous colloquy he will have no doubt as to what Colet had in his mind. Most men would have been abashed and humiliated to the dust, but not so Erasmus, as we shall see from his reply.

> Now, as for your being amused at my playing the rôle of Diogenes, I am indeed glad to afford you any pleasure. But, in all seriousness, I will play the part of Diogenes if my ill luck continues; not that I may appear to myself to be a king of kings, but that I may show my contempt for life itself. . . . I wrote you about Croke, not because I believed that you had some money belonging to other people, . . . but I thought that if by chance there were any, you would more willingly give it to an Englishman; moreover you would with greater right bestow it on a young man, especially if he were a promising youth, and had been abandoned by several who had offered to assist him. Now your offering me your money makes me conscious of your old regard for me, and I am exceedingly grateful. But that phrase of yours has rankled considerably in my mind, though said in joke, "if you will humbly beg." Perhaps you mean, and rightly mean, that it is human pride on my part which makes me bear my lot so poorly; for a truly meek and

Christian mind is contented with all things. But I am somewhat surprised at your connecting humility with shamelessness. For thus you write, "If you will humbly beg," and "If you will beg for it without shame." For if, according to the common practice, you call that humility which is opposed to arrogance, how can impudence and modesty be related? Now, if by humbly you mean "servilely" and "abjectly," you differ greatly, dear Colet, from Seneca, who deems nothing so costly as that which is purchased by entreaty nor considers him to perform the office of a friend at all who expects from his friend the humble word "I beg." . . . But, I pray you, what can be more shameless or more abject than myself, who for a long time past have begged publicly in England? From the Archbishop I have received so much that to accept more, even if he should offer it, would be most disgraceful. I have begged from N. boldly enough, but he just as boldly refused my request. Already I seem shameless to our friend Linacre, who, when he heard that I was leaving London with scarcely six nobles in my pocket, and was well aware of the state of my health, and the winter at hand, strongly advised me to spare the Archbishop, and to spare Mountjoy, and the rather to limit myself, and accustom myself to bear my poverty bravely. Oh, friendly advice! And that is the reason why I especially hate my ill luck, because it does not even permit me to feel ashamed. While my strength permitted me, I was pleased to hide my need. Now I cannot, unless I wish to neglect my health; although not even yet am I so shameless that I will beg from everyone. From others I fear that I shall ask in vain, but under what pretense can I ask from you, forsooth, especially when you yourself are not too well provided for in this way? However, if shamelessness commends itself to you, I will finish this letter with the most impudent ending possible. I am not able to lay aside all sense of shame to the degree that I will beg from you without a pretext, nor so proud that I will reject a gift, if anyone will be friendly enough to give it freely, especially in the present state of my affairs. Farewell.[6]

What a curious mixture of the humble and the arrogant, the noble and the base, the lofty and the commonplace, the abject and the complacent, was this man Erasmus! Always full of self-pity, he capitalized his misfortunes and eagerly cast his burdens on the shoulders of his friends. If at times they grew restive and wearied and sought to make him more self-reliant, he resented it fiercely, as we may observe in the case of Linacre as related above. Luther was not far wrong when he called him one of the flock of Epicurus, for his tastes were certainly Epicurean and in many ways he was even extravagant. One would think that for a man who had suffered poverty all his days, the Cambridge beer and wine might have sufficed, and we are not at all inclined to censure Colet for stinginess, nor Linacre for being hard-hearted. Probably Erasmus' weakness for costly wines was not

[6] *Ibid.*, 237.

the only feature of his mode of living which had been brought to their notice, and had perhaps made them slow to believe his stories of utter destitution. He loved England, and no wonder. The best friends he ever had were there, and he had tested their generosity to the utmost. It was not without reason that he spoke of Britain's mountains of gold, for never was any literary man better treated on his advent to a strange country than was Erasmus by the generous and appreciative English friends who welcomed him to their hearts and homes.

We have many letters from him to Ammonius during this sojourn at the University of Cambridge, and this correspondent must have been very useful to him at that time. Besides keeping him well supplied with Greek wine for which he would accept no payment, he also furnished him the latest news from court and from abroad. At Cambridge Erasmus regarded himself almost in the light of an exile, so far was he removed from those to whom he was wont to look for support and appreciation. But he made good use of Ammonius to further his interests in these directions, as we may see from the following extract of a letter which he received from him, dated London, October 27, 1511:

> I hope within a few days to hand your letters to their Lordships of Winchester and Durham, and if by any commendations of mine I can make you the more acceptable I will excel even Cicero by my oratory. For who so dumb as not to become . . . eloquent in such a good cause? . . . To-morrow I shall go to the palace, and look after your interests there zealously; and I shall also see to it that when the Cambridge carriers return hither another cask of wine shall be sent to you with this letter.[7]

Erasmus writes to Ammonius a few days afterwards:

> About the first of January, I will return to you there [London], so that by our mutual warmth we shall feel the cold the less; for I prefer to spend the summer here rather than the winter. Besides it is not good for me to remain longer away from my Jupiter [Mountjoy], although this place is not entirely unpleasing to me. Then, too, I see a chance to make a little money, if one desires to play the part of a trifler. I am very eager to know in what spirit the Bishops of Winchester and Durham received my letters, so tell me if there is anything new. You will do me a favor if you see to it that the enclosed letters be dispatched to Italy.[8]

In his next letter, written on the eleventh of November of the same year, he laments his mistake in leaving Rome and Italy, easily choosing to forget what his English friends had already done for him. So, too, he is very much disappointed to learn from Ammonius that Pope Julius, who had been very near death, had recovered.

> It seems to me that I have merited my misfortunes when I remember how good to me was the Italy and the Rome that I had

[7] *Ibid.*, 236. [8] *Ibid.*, 238.

abandoned. Alas for the change; but I must bear up under the circumstances as best I may. That is bad news that you tell me about Italy, not that I love the French, but that I hate war. For when we daily see how many years it takes to settle a little marauding expedition, what may we expect should so grave a war as this one once become started? Nor is there anyone on whom I can lay the blame, unless it be on that Jewish physician of the Pope's, either because he has lost his cunning, or that hellebore is ineffective. But the fates themselves will find a way out. I am somewhat angry with these heretics for this reason, that they have raised the price of fuel on me with winter at hand.[9] I do not mind hunger, if I can only contrive to live. I am very thankful to you for forwarding my letters to their Lordships of Winchester and Durham, and for your intercession in my behalf; also for the wine sent to me when I did not in the least expect it, and for my letters so diligently dispatched to Italy. But why do I recount these few services, when in everything you show yourself to be Ammonius, that is, my most sincere friend?

Before I betake myself thither, some warm retreat must be prepared for me where I can bury myself this winter. I would prefer not to be far away from St. Paul's; for it is best for me to avoid Mountjoy's while that Cerberus maintains possession of it, although even there I see no place suitably protected from the cold, unless I should dispossess the owner entirely. Perhaps there may be something of the sort among the Augustinians. Francis of Padua invites me to his home in his letter, and promises me real Italian fare. Tell me what you think of that plan. I congratulate Lord Mountjoy on his happy return, and I beg you to see that he receives my letter. I had written also to the Bishop of Rochester by the same bearer who delivered to you my last; if you have the opportunity, ascertain if he got it. With the other two, try to accomplish, I beg of you, what you have begun, and I will expect a letter from you before I move hence. Bullock sends again his kind regards to you, and was very glad to hear from you. When you meet More, ask him whether he gave my letter to the Archbishop, and whether that which he gave me was his own or another's. Farewell, my dear friend.[10]

This was not a very prolific period for Erasmus' pen, and we can readily see the reason why, when we observe his almost pitiable anxiety to obtain financial assistance from any and all sources. But from a letter to Wentford we learn that about this time he set himself to work on his *De conscribendis epistolis,* and also put the finishing corrections to his *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum,* which he was writing for Colet's school, and which he published July fifteenth of the next year. Mountjoy, a sure resource in his direst need, had now

[9] A rather callous joke: he is alluding to the two men who were burned in Smithfield for heresy on the 18th of October of this same year.
[10] Eras. Ep. 240.

returned to London; and he now also began to have his necessities relieved by others. One of these was Bishop John Fisher. The Bishop wrote him a kind letter and sent him a gift of money:

> I hope you are well, Erasmus, and I pray you take it not ill that I did not write when lately I sent you something. For the messenger was in a hurry to leave town, and I had met him just as I was leaving my residence. And so although I was unable to write you, yet I sent you the gift you had requested, not a great amount; and certainly not from that vast fund of money which you deem to be in my possession. Let people say what they will, Erasmus, but believe me I have nothing which I can spend at my own volition alone. The use of such money is prescribed to us, and we may not change such prescription, no matter how much we may desire so to do. I who see you so necessary to our University, will not suffer you to want as long as anything remains to me of my small means. At the same time I will use my efforts whenever the opportunity offers to beg assistance from others whenever my own shall be lacking. Your friend Mountjoy, who is also mine, will be mindful of you, I am sure, if he has ever promised to do so; and I will willingly urge him in this matter, for he is now in the palace. My best wishes to you, Erasmus. London, c. November 18, 1511.[11]

This certainly was a kindly letter from the Bishop to a man who had not the slightest claim on him beyond that which all cases of need have on generous hearts. And these Englishmen were generous to him, while he often despised the hands that fed him. It is hard to have to make such an admission with regard to Erasmus, but what other conclusion can we draw from his letters to Ammonius? The latter had said that his coming to England had been an unlucky thing for him, and Erasmus answered by saying:

> I am sorry that your coming to England has not turned out according to your wishes, but on the other hand I am very glad that your opinions coincide with mine in this matter. For while these people are lascivious bulls and miserly dung-eaters, nevertheless they imagine that they alone feed on ambrosia and Jupiter's brain.[12]

And Ammonius was equally emphatic in his expressions, although he was at that moment entirely dependent on English generosity, having been appointed through the intercession of his fellow-countryman, the Bishop of Worcester, to the post of Latin secretary to Henry VIII. He writes to his friend Erasmus as follows:

> Either my servant is exceedingly unlucky, that whatever he does turns out badly, or your Cambridge horde excels the rest of these inhospitable Britons in barbarism, so ignorant are they of all courtesy, and so completely devoid of any refinement; and I would much like to see a few of them hanged on a gibbet.[13]

[11] *Ibid.*, 242. [12] *Ibid.*, 245. [13] *Ibid.*, 239.

And responsive to that sentiment Erasmus writes that he is going to angle for a few New Year's presents before leaving Cambridge:

> I am preparing some baits for New Year's day, although I fear it will be trouble wasted. And what a University it is! There is not a person in it that can be found to write tolerably at any price. . . . I have still seven or eight days to sweat in this workhouse, and then we will foregather at our ease and pleasure.[14]

But Ammonius continues to complain of his hard lot, and says in his next letter:

> I know that you give me good advice when you tell me that it is necessary to bear our troubles bravely. But I wish you would show me how, providing you do not begin to philosophize.[15]

To this Erasmus made the answer which has been frequently quoted against him:

> May the Muses cease to love me, my Andreas, if I have exaggerated your good fortune in the least. I am speaking from my heart. I was very violently brought to bed on the Feast of the Conception, and gave birth to several stones. Will you add this also to the other reasons why I am fortunate? Do not be too importunate with his Lordship of Winchester.
>
> You ask my advice as to how best to bear your troubles bravely. Come, I will teach you what you know better than I, nor, since you object, will I begin philosophizing. Firstly, put on a bold front, and never be ashamed of anything. Then, mix freely in other people's affairs. Push everybody out of your way. Neither love nor hate anyone inordinately, but measure everything according to your own interests. To that end let all the aims of your life be directed. Part with nothing, unless you expect to receive it back with interest; and flatter everyone in all things. But these are commonplaces, you will say. Come then, if you will have it so, here is a private counsel, which I will whisper into your ear. You are aware of the jealous vanity of the English; make use of it for your own advantage. Ride two horses at once. Employ several people to solicit the privilege of extending favors to you. Threaten to leave, and prepare for departing. Exhibit letters wherein you are invited to go somewhere else for flattering considerations. Take yourself off occasionally, so that in your absence they will miss you.[16]

This is very cold-blooded advice, and would be incredible were it not given to us in his own words, and most secretly. What shall we call it—consummate hypocrisy, calculating ingratitude, feigned respect, intolerable selfishness, or disgusting insincerity? Perhaps it was a combination of all these base qualities.

But we have dwelt long enough on the unpleasant characteristics of

[14] *Ibid.*, 246, 248. [15] *Ibid.*, 249. [16] *Ibid.*, 250.

Erasmus, and will turn to more agreeable topics. He had not lost sight of his possible sources of revenue on the continent, and we find him corresponding with Jerome Busleiden of Mechlin, Robert Guibé, Bishop of Nantes, and his old friend Antony of Bergen. His letter to the latter would be well worth reproducing here had we the time, since it is principally concerned with denouncing the war which was impending between Pope Julius II, who wished to clear Italy of the French invaders (for they held a great deal of the northern part), and Louis XII of France, who refused to be thus driven out. The German Empire, England, Scotland, Spain, and several of the independent Italian states had ranged themselves on either side, and the war that was imminent showed likelihood of becoming a real world war. Henry VIII of England had joined the Holy League against France on November 13th, of this year 1511; so that Erasmus, in common with all England, was much disturbed at the prospect. To see Henry in an alliance with Pope Julius, his *bête noire,* was more than he could stand with equanimity; so he took occasion, in this letter to the Abbot, to express his abhorrence of this war and all wars generally. In this epistle, which he afterwards expanded into a long essay and published under the title of *Dulce bellum inexpertis* as one of his *Adages,* we see him at his best because he was sincere. He showed the folly of war as it had never before been described, and pointed out that this favorite pastime of kings was ungodly, unnatural, and eventually unprofitable to all concerned.

His next letters are all dated from London; so we surmise that, after waiting to see what New Year's Day might bring him in the line of presents from his Cambridge friends, he left the University and hied to London to arrange his affairs there, and to speak with his various patrons face to face. He and Ammonius both deemed this the better and more promising plan for drawing financial assistance.

While here, he was invited to accompany Bishop Fisher to the Lateran Council which had been summoned by Pope Julius. This aged Pontiff had shown himself such a good general in his efforts to drive the French invaders out of Italy, making use of both his military and his spiritual weapons, that Louis XII and his ally the Emperor Maximilian decided to copy the Pope's tactics and have recourse to weapons spiritual likewise. For this purpose they had persuaded a few of the Cardinals who were not Italians, or who were, for various reasons, not in sympathy with the Pope, to convene a Council of the Church at Pisa, to which Council Julius was summoned to appear as a public delinquent. To see his authority thus set at defiance and himself mocked was no doubt very irritating to the aged and haughty Pontiff; but as the Council opened with only seven Cardinals and a few bishops present, and as even the clergy of Pisa declined to take part in the proceedings and closed the doors of the cathedral against them, he felt that he could afford to smile at their attempts. However, they adjourned to Milan, then held by the French king, and there began to issue their decrees. To offset this Pope Julius appointed a General Council to be convened at Rome, which was called the Council of Lateran from the church in

which its deliberations were held, and which he opened in person with great solemnity on May 3, 1512. This was the Council to which Bishop Fisher had been summoned, and to which he had invited Erasmus to accompany him. The Pope had given timely notice to the refractory Cardinals to return to their obedience, and then he very astutely proceeded to form new alliances. He established what was known as the Holy League, consisting of the King of Aragon, the Venetian Republic, and King Henry VIII of England. After many vicissitudes of fortune, the Pope and his allies at last got the upper hand of Louis XII's general, La Jalisse, and either drove him out or forced him to withdraw his troops from the Milanese territory with great slaughter.

Why Bishop Fisher did not attend the Council is not known. It was summoned to assemble in November, 1512, but assembled in the previous May as we have stated, and Bishop Fisher was not a member of the second embassy of bishops then appointed.

On the 19th of February following we find Erasmus back again at Cambridge, much as he disliked it. It is probable that the duties for which he had been engaged had served to recall him. But this time he did not stay long, for he returned to London on March 26th to arrange for taking over the parish of Aldington in Kent, with which benefice he had been presented a few days previously by his good friend Archbishop Warham. We have an extract from a letter written on the part of the Archbishop to Erasmus back in 1509 or thereabouts, when he was in Italy, which reads to the following effect:

> I desire you to consent to accept from me one hundred and fifty nobles on your arrival here, the condition being that you will agree to spend the rest of your life in England, with the privilege of visiting your native country and your other friends at opportune times.[17]

This was only a scrap from a letter the rest of which is lost. From this time forward Erasmus looked to the Archbishop as his principal hope and stay; and it is from this time that he began to speak about a benefice as being among the things that he might possibly receive. Hence we may surmise that it was this prospective benefice which was held out to him as an inducement to settle in England, and that the presents of cash were intended to carry him along until the aforesaid benefice fell out. It was undoubtedly for this reason that Ammonius used to call him fortunate, not so much, we may assume, on account of his actual condition, but because of his prospects. At last the expected and long desired event occurred; for on March 22, 1512, he was appointed rector of the parish of Aldington in Kent, a place about sixty miles from London. The annual value of this living was about thirty-six pounds, six shillings, eight pence, a very large sum for those days. We copy the quaint document certifying his appointment from the transcription as it appears in Vischer.[18]

[17] *Ibid.*, 214.

[18] *Erasmiana*, p. 9.

I William, by divine permission, Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and Legate to the Apostolic See, to our beloved in Christ the administrator of the parish of Aldington, or to any suitable custodian whatsoever, health, grace, and benediction:

Whereas, out of our regard for him we have conferred on our beloved son Erasmus of Rotterdam the parish church of Aldington in our diocese of Canterbury, through its free resignation into our hands by Master John Alen, doctor of canon and civil law, its last incumbent, and by us declared vacant and rightfully at our disposal; and have canonically appointed him rector of the same, with all its rights and appurtenances:

Therefore, we request and order you, enjoining it on you strongly, to induct, cause to be inducted, and to defend when inducted, so far as you are able, the same Erasmus, or his administrator in his name, into the real and corporal possession of the said church, and into all its rights and appurtenances:—

And what you shall have performed in the premises, you shall duly certify unto us whenever you shall be properly required.

In witness thereof our seal is appended to the present instrument.

Given at our palace of Lambeth, the twenty-second day of the month of March, in the year of our Lord fifteen hundred and eleven, and of our translation hither the ninth.

CHAPTER XXIV

ENGLAND: BENEFICE OF ALDINGTON; NEW WRITINGS

The income from this benefice was very welcome, but the duties attendant on the position of parish priest were not as acceptable; so with due regard to the canonical law governing such cases he proceeded at once to secure substitutes to perform his functions in the parish, while he still continued his literary and professorial work at London and Cambridge. About three months afterwards he resigned the position with the permission of Archbishop Warham, who covenanted with him and his successor in the parish, John Thornton, Prior of St. Martin's at Dover, that in consideration of such resignation Erasmus should be permitted to draw by way of pension twenty pounds from said living annually, half to be paid at Michaelmas, and half at Lady Day. By this transaction the Archbishop fulfilled his promise of a benefice to Erasmus, and at the same time relieved him of its obligations. Since we are going to comment on the reasons actuating the Archbishop in giving Erasmus this living, and the motives influencing Erasmus in accepting it and then almost immediately resigning it, we shall transcribe from the document of authorization given by the Archbishop to Erasmus as much as is necessary for our purpose.[1]

> I William, by divine permission Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and Legate of the Apostolic See, desire for you health in the Lord and entire confidence in these presents:
>
> We have brought, and desire to bring to the knowledge of you all and several by these presents, that although from that time when first by the providence of God, albeit unworthy, we were promoted to the dignity of the Archbishopric of Canterbury, we have never had in mind to make any church subject to us pay a tax or charge it with the payment of a pension by our authority, but it has ever been our care that we should leave all our churches to our successors as free and immune from pensions as we have received them from our predecessors; nevertheless, moved by the innumerable virtues of Erasmus of Rotterdam, a man of the most consummate achievement in Latin and Greek, who like a bright star illuminates our times by his learning and eloquence, we have decided in this case to recede somewhat from our custom. And it should not seem strange to anyone that we have thought proper to change somewhat from our former custom in behalf of a man so remark-

[1] The original document is kept in the University of Basle, and has been reproduced in his *Erasmiana* by Prof. Wilhelm Vischer.

able as he, and one so placed beyond all doubt by his genius. But when we conferred on him a benefice carrying with it the care of souls, namely, the church of Aldington in our diocese of Canterbury, although in theology as in every other kind of science he is most learned, yet because he was unable to propound the word of God in English to his parishioners, or to converse with them in their own vernacular speech, of which he is ignorant, though at the same time most eloquent in Greek and Latin; he therefore, desiring to resign the said church, has petitioned us to provide for him an annual pension from the same. We thereupon, by granting this petition, consider that we shall better safeguard the safety of souls, and he will be the better able to devote himself to his literary work to which he is entirely dedicated. His singular love for the English has also moved us, since he is a man who, spurning Italy, France, and Germany, in which countries he might have spent his life very comfortably, has preferred to betake himself hither, so that at the same time he might end his days here with his friends, and they might derive great pleasure from the company of so learned a man.

It is evident that the Archbishop desired to put Erasmus out of the reach of want in case of his own death; otherwise he would have helped him with ready cash as he had previously done. But it is open to doubt that he would have gone to all the formalities and ceremonies incident on inducting Erasmus into a living, had he known the latter's intention of resigning it so quickly. We are led to infer that Erasmus had not made him acquainted with his ecclesiastical disabilities which prevented him from holding a benefice, but that he had made sure of the benefice first, trusting to his ability to formulate strong and sufficient reasons which would induce the Archbishop to charge his benefice with a pension. There was no direct canon of the Church forbidding such a transaction, if we are rightly informed; but if there were Erasmus was forced to take this slight risk. We, who have the letters of Erasmus before us, and can glean from them his sentiments on benefices when they referred to himself, are forced to smile when his friend Beatus Rhenanus tells of Erasmus' hesitation in accepting Archbishop Warham's bounty in this regard, telling us that when he was prevented by his conscience from immediately accepting the Aldington parish the Archbishop said to him, "Who has a better right to live on church funds than yourself, who, by your exceedingly useful writings, instruct, teach, and assist the very priests in charge of these churches? And not alone these, but also every church throughout the world, of which these men singly and severally have the care and perform the duties." [2]

In his *Ecclesiastes* Erasmus says that Warham pressed this benefice upon him in spite of his refusal to accept it on the grounds that it carried with it a pastoral charge, something which he said he could not fulfil on account of not knowing English. The Archbishop thereupon, by converting it into a pension on that parish, thought to make it easier

[2] Eras. Ep. IV, l. 229; and see also the *Ecclesiastes*, pp. 100 *sqq.* in the edition of Gryphius, Lyons, 1543.

for him, but Erasmus says that he still felt qualms of conscience in taking money to which he had no claim by reason of service.

Now why all this unusual shyness, this demur to the accepting of money which was so essential to his maintenance and which was being forced on him, if you will, by a venerable and saintly prelate, and presumably one who knew his duty to the Church and to his fellow-man? The reason is not far to seek, for he had just recorded himself in his *Praise of Folly* as being opposed to this and similar practices, and he had to allow himself a loophole of escape from the possible charge of interested inconsistency. Also, as a matter of fact, he was often accused in after days of exactly this thing, and took occasion, when publishing the *Ecclesiastes,* to defend himself in the manner quoted above. We are rather glad to have our view of the matter substantiated by so thoughtful and just a writer as Emerton.

> Erasmus' own account of the transaction represents himself as very reluctant to take the benefice, and Warham as insisting upon it so urgently that he finally could no longer resist. Fortunately we have the original documents in Warham's own words, and there is no hint of any reluctance on Erasmus' part. . . . Here is the plain evidence of a serious document of record that Erasmus not only took his pension gladly, but actually begged for it; and it is quite in harmony with this that we afterwards find him quarreling with his successor about certain tithes which the latter thought were to be deducted from the twenty pounds.[3]

But he was grateful to the Archbishop in the only way in which he could show his gratitude; for we see that in April of this year he dedicated to him his second and amplified edition of Lucian's *Dialogues,* which, for some reason or other, was not published for two years to come.

> I send you some dialogues of Lucian, a part of them recently translated by me, and some revised. "You send me trifles," you will say. Trifles they are surely, but with a literary flavor, so that you may smile at them indeed, if you are ever able to smile, a man hemmed in by so many duties and overwhelmed by so much business. But to whom should I rather send whatever it be of ludicrous or serious that my Muse produces than to you my only patron, who alone give me courage, nourish my talent, furnish me leisure, and do honor to my studies? Farewell. London, April 29, 1512.[4]

This added source of income seems to have stimulated his literary activity; for in addition to the works of Lucian he had printed in Paris by Badius on July 15th his book entitled *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo.* This *Copia* was really a school book designed to assist tyros in Latin by furnishing them with abundant turns and phrases of that language. His original intention

[3] *Erasmus,* p. 185.

[4] Eras. Ep. 261.

had been to dedicate it to the son of his old patroness the Marchioness of Veere, from which circumstance we may adduce the conclusion that some part of it had been in his mind for a long time; but his need of propitiating Colet, and the fact that the book would be a useful addition to the textbooks used in Colet's new school at St. Paul's, induced him to dedicate it to his English friend. Part of the dedication follows:

> I am not at all unaware how much I owe the British publicly, and how greatly I am beholden personally to yourself, in thus deeming it to be my duty to offer some little literary gift to your school. Therefore I have decided to dedicate these two new commentaries to the new school; and, unless I am much mistaken, the work will prove to be both suitable and profitable to the young.[5]

All the while he kept an open ear for the latest reports from Rome. He writes to Ammonius to keep him well informed of anything of interest that he may happen to hear. Particularly is he interested in the doings of Pope Julius, who did not die according to the general expectation.

> If you have any accurate information, please share it with me. For I greatly desire to know if Julius is truly playing the part of Julius, and Christ is maintaining the ancient custom of especially exposing to the storms of adversity those whom He particularly desires to have regarded as His own. I, dear Andreas, have undertaken a vow for the happy issue of affairs ecclesiastical. I know that you will approve my pious resolution. I shall make a visit to Our Lady of Walsingham, and there I will suspend a votive hymn. Look it up, in case you betake yourself thither.
>
> Bullock is making great progress in Greek, and entertains wonderful regard for you. I especially wish to be remembered to Master John, the support of all refined learning. Please thank Carmilianus on my part for so affectionately lying about me in his learned letter to [John] Bryan, in which he styles me "the most learned of the learned," an encomium which the less I merit the more gratitude I owe him for his remarkable kindness and attention to me. It is certainly an honor and a pleasure to me to be praised by him who is by all the most praised.[6]

And yet he ridiculed and made fun of this learned friar behind his back, although he was indebted to him for a gift;[7] so we must doubt his sincerity as expressed in the above letter. A few words may be permitted on the subject of his visit to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.[8] This was a celebrated shrine of devotion to Our Lady, situated in Norfolk, and sharing with Loretto and Compostella a world-wide reputation. To a man who had just published the *Praise of Folly* and had given utterance and currency to such unconventionalities as

[5] *Ibid.*, 260, l. 38.
[6] *Ibid.*, 262.
[7] *Idem*, l. 12n.
[8] See his colloquy, *Peregrinatio religionis ergo.*

are therein contained, the shrine at Walsingham and the zeal of its devotees were joyous and welcome subjects for irreverent mirth. However, he had not yet entirely cleared himself of the odium which, in some quarters, attached itself to his work on *Folly,* and was by no means anxious to embroil himself in further difficulties for the present. And it was not until twelve years later that he finally decided to make his sentiments known on the subject of pilgrimages such as this to Our Lady of Walsingham. This speaks well for the unaffected piety of the English people of that day that Erasmus did not venture to publish his impressions of this shrine, knowing that he would thereby shock and offend the feelings of that people. The English of that time seem to have been a reverent and simple-minded race, with an entire trust in a personal Deity and a strong hold on the faith which they had received from Augustine and Bede. Doubtless they had observed from time to time that they were being exploited by some of the clergy; but they were also aware that they were being exploited by the king and the nobility as well. They were, however, a patient people, and it was only later on, when the government, envying the wealth that the clergy had acquired from their flocks, began to whisper insinuations into their ears that they were being robbed that the people rose up in a frenzy and destroyed much that was good with much that was bad. Thus passed away the Shrine of Walsingham with its appeal to human credulity, and so also passed away with it the comforting of many generations of weary and sin-laden souls. Gone was the spiritual uplift that had gladdened a myriad of anxious hearts; gone the mysterious attraction that alone avails to lift up the gaze of the faltering and hopeless and place it on higher things. And there was nothing to take its place in the hearts of the ignorant and the illiterate. The few who could read might derive comfort from the study of the Bible; but where was solace to be found for the millions who could not even read or sign their own names? We need not here enter into a discussion of the psychology of Lourdes, or any other of the more modern shrines; for it is not what they are but what they do that concerns us; and, if a pilgrim to Walsingham returned home better in body and mind than when he went thither, we are not interested to know just how much he left behind him for the monks of the Priory. Erasmus and his like needed nothing of the extraneous to enable them to lift up their minds and hearts to their Creator, and they could not quite understand that others might not be so fortunate in that respect as they. In a few moments, nay, extemporaneously, Erasmus could formulate and utter the most elaborate and eloquent of prayers; but he failed to realize that others less gifted might need the concrete image or picture of God and His saints before the torpid mind could articulate its simple wants, or divest itself of the grossly material. Who is there of ordinary mortals who cannot best commune with the memory of a mother's love while he is gazing on her picture?

So in this colloquy Erasmus set himself to turn into ridicule the pilgrimage to Walsingham. The first thing naturally that offends him is the fact that monks are in charge of the shrine, and, to make

the matter worse, monks of his own Order—the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. This is more than enough to make him uncivil, to put it very mildly. He makes fun of his former brethren by saying that they are monks when it pleases them to be so called, but Canons Regular at other times. Being asked to explain this riddle, he says:

> They are canons when things are unpleasant for them, but monks when things are pleasant. If the Roman Pontiff should launch a thunderbolt at all monks, then they will be canons; but if the Pontiff should permit all monks to marry, then they will be monks.

It is noticeable, however, that he has to admit the monks are men of good lives: "not much amiss with them, richer in piety than revenue." Then he goes on in that cynical manner which is so difficult to arraign, because, while there are no evident untruths, the whole subject matter is so exaggerated and the perspective of things so distorted that the exact truth is clouded. But this is not the worst. In this colloquy, as in the *Praise of Folly,* he has not balked at blasphemy, and in one instance the blasphemy savors of the obscene. We dare not transfer it to these pages, but will refer the reader to the colloquy in question in case he has any desire to pursue further an unpleasant subject. But we must not forget to notice that Erasmus hung up before the shrine his own votive offering to the Lady of Walsingham, in the shape of a Greek poem. Seebohm says:

> Erasmus made this pilgrimage in a satirical and unbelieving mood, and his votive ode was rather a joke played upon the ignorant canons, than any proof that he himself was a worshipper of the Virgin, or a believer in the efficacy of pilgrimages to her shrine.[9]

We are inclined to doubt this, and, having come to the conclusion, as the result of our researches into the character of Erasmus, that he was a remarkable combination of the superstitious and the freethinker, we feel that, in hanging up his votive offering to the Lady of the Shrine, he was simply casting an anchor to windward. His freethinking traits made him an iconoclast, but, at the same time, his superstitious nature made him a very cautious one. He knew, long before Burke had formulated the idea, that "all men who are ruined, are ruined on the side of their natural propensities"; and if a few Greek verses might possibly help in the circumstances, he was not the one to lose the chance. In the same colloquy he also tells of a pilgrimage which he and Colet made to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury. As it is couched in the same flippant vein, and as Colet was long dead when Erasmus described that really pious man's part in it, we need not here dwell on it further than to say that in none of Colet's published writings does he scoff at religious pilgrimages, nor throw any doubt whatever on the efficacy of the intercession of the saints.[10]

[9] *Oxford Reformers,* p. 275.

[10] This colloquy, *Peregrinatio religionis ergo,* was first published by Froben at Basle in an edition of the *Colloquies* which he brought out in 1526.

Lest anyone may question that he was superstitious, we will here furnish rather an amusing proof which he has left us in a letter to Richardoto in 1533. After telling this friend that he was being devoured by fleas, he goes on to say:

> I used to say jokingly to my friends that they were not fleas that bit me, but demons; and it turned out that this was no pleasantry, but a reality; for it is not long since a woman was burnt who, though married, had carried on a secret commerce with the Devil for eighteen years past. Among other crimes, she admitted that by the hand of her lover she had sent into this very town several large bags of fleas. The place where she was burnt is called Kylchove, and is about two leagues from here. I am writing this to you while standing; and even while finishing this letter these cursed animals bite me cruelly in my trousers and around my neck.[11]

This certainly is a good example of his belief in diabolism. Here is another one which appears in his letter to Damian à Goes in 1533:

> The German name of the town concerning which they spoke to you is Schiltach, which is about eight German long-miles from Freiburg. I dare not insist that all they say is exactly true; this is certain, that in a moment the town was all on fire, and a woman acknowledged under torture the part she took in it. The fire occurred on the tenth of April, the Thursday before Easter of the year 1533. Several inhabitants of the town have made the following deposition, which they have sworn to before the mayor of the town, according to the account of it given me by Henry Glareanus, and as well as I can remember it. The Demon gave the signal by a shrill whistle from one of the upper stories of a house; a tavern-keeper, who thought it was a robber, ascended the stairs, but found nobody. At the same moment there was heard another whistle on the next floor higher; the tavern-keeper hastened thither, thinking that he was pursuing his robber, but could see nothing. Then he heard a whistle from the top of a chimney. Thereupon he felt there was some sorcery in it, and bidding his household be of good cheer, sent for two priests. A man who was arrested was exorcised, and thereupon he avowed that he was the Devil; and, asked what he was doing there, he admitted that his design was to burn the town. The priests threatened him, but he answered that he did not much fear them, because one of them lived in concubinage, while the other was a robber. Some time after, this same man raised in the air and transported to a chimney-top a woman with whom he had maintained illicit relations for fifteen years, and who had never ceased to go to confession and communion every year. He had given her a saucepan, and had told her to turn it upside down. She did so, and in an hour's time the entire town was reduced to ashes. I am not surely informed

[11] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1480.

whether or not the Demon ruined this town and betrayed this woman because she had given him a rival in her affections in the person of the son of the tavern-keeper. That, however, is not beyond probability.[12]

Another instance of his belief in magic, sorcery, witchcraft, or whatever else one might wish to call it, occurs in his *Lucubrationes Sancti Hieronymi,* Tome I, p. 194, where he mentions a convent of nuns, some of whom were possessed by evil spirits and put to death. He claims that he was himself a witness to this when he was a young man and lived with the Bishop of Cambrai.

But we must not follow this matter any further, although the works of Erasmus furnish still other proofs of his spirit of credulity. It is not to reproach Erasmus that we mention these facts about him here, but only to show that he himself was not entirely devoid of the superstition for which he so fiercely assails his monastic brethren. Drummond concedes this vein of superstition in Erasmus, but seeks to palliate it by saying that he suspects Erasmus to be laughing in his sleeve. While acknowledging the remote possibility, we, like Jortin,[13] fail to see in the facts quoted the slightest probability.

We have an enlightening letter from Erasmus to Peter Gilles in the autumn of this year (1512), from which we glean that he was at work on the correction of the *New Testament* and his commentary on the Epistles of St. Jerome; and he also states that he is going to revise Seneca. The *New Testament* was undoubtedly intended to be his *opus magnum,* by which he aimed to show the world both his scholarship and his zeal for religion. But as it was not yet ready to be given to the world, we shall defer comment until later.

Another item of his correspondence about this time was a letter which he sent to the son of his old patroness the Marchioness of Veere. Adolphus of Veere and Burgundy was now a young man of about twenty-three, and of growing importance in his native country. At present he was associated with his cousin Philip of Burgundy in performing the duties of Admiral of Flanders. He had contracted an alliance, and was on the point of marrying Anne, daughter of John, the sixth lord of Bergen, and niece of Erasmus' old patron Henry, Bishop of Cambrai, from which alliance of the houses of two of his ancient friends our subject augured some good might accrue to himself. It would seem that Adolphus had already made him a flattering offer of some sort when Erasmus was returning from Italy, which offer he had chosen to refuse. Now, in his constant efforts to keep pace with his increasing expenditures, he expresses his deep regret for not having accepted the Prince's kindness:

Most accomplished Prince. I sincerely hope you are well. For a long time I have been trying to fly hence to you, but the remarkable kindness of some of my friends, and especially of the Archbishop of Canterbury, detains me here. Lord Mountjoy, the

[12] *Ibid.,* 1253, col. 1473.

[13] See Jortin's *Erasmus,* Vol. II, p. 43.

governor of Hammes Castle, a man with a great regard for youself, is ever watchful, amid these warlike tumults, for the interests of your friends, and subserves them to his utmost ability. I cannot express in words how deeply I grieve over the commotions in human affairs that are about to take place, and with no one arising to prevent them. And I grieve all the more that our country is in a short time to be implicated in these disasters, particularly as she will not only be harassed by such long continued wars, but well-nigh destroyed. Would that I might safely commit to writing my feelings in this matter!

How often have I regretted that I did not embrace the good fortune you offered me at Louvain three years ago! In truth, the great expectations and the mountains of gold over in England which I had pictured, had made me insolent. But misfortune has curbed my pride. Now, if even a little modicum of assistance were granted me with you, like Ulysses I would eagerly desire to behold the smoke arising over my native land. I, your old Erasmus, beseech you to assist me; for you can, and will, if you will only bear it in mind. Farewell. London, 1512.[14]

But Adolphus did not respond to this appeal, either because he did not feel that his subvention was necessary, or because his mind was pre-occupied with weightier affairs, and he might easily have remembered that Erasmus was very apt to cry "Wolf! Wolf!" on light occasion. War clouds were threatening his little principality, and his court was being rapidly involved with the other powers in the Holy League against France. So Erasmus' appeal fell unheeded. Had it been attended to and a position found for him at the Prince's court, it is a matter of speculation how his English friends would have regarded this palpable desertion, since we must remember that he was morally bound to stay in England unless released from his promise by Archbishop Warham. And that he made such a promise there can be little doubt, in view of all the Archbishop did for him.[15]

His activities for the year 1513 opened with a translation of the *Precepts of Plutarch,* dedicated to John Yonge, an ecclesiastical lawyer who was at that time in a good position to be serviceable to him. But it was a bad time for the dedication of the book, for Yonge was in France with the army. Erasmus had perforce to entrust the presenting of the book to Ammonius, who sent him back the following account of Yonge's acceptance of it:

I met the Master of the Rolls [Yonge] and, presenting the book of Plutarch, I showed him what you had written to him about it. He expressed his thanks briefly and, as he was busy, or seemed to be, he hurried himself off, and I did not have any other chance of speaking with him.[16]

[14] Eras. Ep. 266.

[15] We learn from Cooper's *Memoir of Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby,* as edited by Mayor in 1874, pp. 124 and 200, that on December 28th, of this year (1512) he was paid twenty shillings for writing the epitaph for the tomb of Lady Margaret in Westminster Abbey.

[16] Eras. Ep. 280.

Thus the affair fell flat, and we have no means of knowing whether or not Yonge ever gave him a *quid pro quo*. It is quite probable, however, that if he did not it was not that Erasmus did not remind him of the honor he had done him in thus dedicating to him a book. We have related how he dedicated his *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum* to Colet's new school at St. Paul's; and in a letter from him to Colet on July 11th of this year, dated from Cambridge, he proceeds to remind Colet that he had promised him fifteen angels for the aforesaid dedication, but that he had not received them. The only fact that is of real interest in this same letter is that he has finished correcting the proofs of his *New Testament,* and is about to begin work on St. Jerome's Epistles.

About this same time he dedicated to King Henry VIII a translation from Greek into Latin of Plutarch's *De discrimine adulatoris et amici.*[17] In the preface to it he goes on to say that there is nothing more agreeable or more necessary than a sincere friend; that a king ought to be endowed with many eyes, that is, many friends who are prudent and faithful; that all great kings, such as Darius, Xerxes, Croesus, Alexander, and many others, surrounded themselves with such, and those who did not were not fortunate in their reigns. Then he comments on the difficulty of distinguishing between the true and the false friends, and quotes the old adage, "Prosperity attracts friends, but adversity proves their worth." But it was an inauspicious moment to present books to Henry, for he was at that very time in France, preparing to attack Louis XII in his own territories, and it is doubtful that Henry ever gave it a second glance until a later edition was published many years after.

Ammonius, in his capacity of Latin secretary to the king, had been obliged to accompany his master to the war in France, and through him Erasmus had learned what was going on in camp. A little of this may not be devoid of interest, as we glean it from Erasmus' letter to Ammonius:

> At London the plague is raging no less violently than the war itself. Hence I am compelled to stay at Cambridge, but daily casting about how I may conveniently betake myself off. But no opportunity offers, and the thirty nobles which I expect at Michaelmas also detains me. Sixtin has already gone to Brabant. My ardor for correcting the St. Jerome and illustrating it with scholia is so great that I seem to myself to have been breathed upon by some divine influence. Already I have it almost entirely corrected by the collation of many of the more ancient copies. But to do this is costing me an incredible amount of money.
>
> I laugh heartily at the sort of camp life which you so graphically depicted in your letter to your John; and you have brought to our very eyes the neighing of the horses, the shouting of the soldiers, the charging of the cavalry, the sounding of bugles, the thunder and flashing of the cannon, the vomiting of the sick, and the groans of the dying. Oh, happy fellow if you return unharmed, which may

[17] *The Difference between a Flatterer and a Friend.*

> Almighty God grant! What pleasant stories of all these dreadful happenings will this experience furnish you for the rest of your life! But I beseech you again and again, dear Ammonius, and in the name of the Muses and the Graces, that you will bear in mind what I admonished you to do in my last letter, that is, to fight in safety. Be as fierce as you like with your pen, and slay ten thousand of the enemy in one day, if you wish. That our side is winning pleases me so much that I cannot express the joy I feel either by tongue or pen. . . . September 1, 1513.[18]

Ammonius made answer to this in due time and would have written before, but had not known where to find him. Erasmus had a mortal fear of the plague and, as we have before related, tried to avoid it as much as he could by fleeing before it, whenever he heard of its approach. Just now it was raging both in London and Cambridge, so he had abandoned both places for the time being. Ammonius refers to this fact in his letter:

> Just as soon as I had touched English soil, I began to enquire where you were, since you had written to me that you had hurried away from the outbreak of the plague at Cambridge. Sixtin was the only one who was able to tell me about your leaving Cambridge by reason of the plague, and of having gone no one knew whither, but that, suffering from the scarcity of wine, and considering that more serious than the plague, you had returned to Cambridge, and were there at present. Oh, brave soldier of Bacchus, who in supreme peril were unwilling to desert your leader! Therefore, I will send you herewith a taste of your leader, a skin of Cretan wine. . . .
>
> I have many things to tell you in response to your letter, but this one thing I must not omit, namely, that Carmelianus recently published an epitaph on the King of Scotland, filled with womanish curses, which you will soon read when it issues from the press of Pynson.[19]

The reference to the epitaph on the Scottish king alludes to his death at the disastrous battle of Flodden, where Erasmus' pupil, the young Archbishop, perished with his father, as we have already related.

But, in spite of the warmth which we may assume the Greek wine to have imparted to him, he was quite low-spirited at this time. Someone, whom we are justified in thinking to be Lord Mountjoy, had responded but poorly to his appeals for assistance, whether from being occupied in matters pertaining to the war, or being fatigued with the constant drain on his purse, we know not, but Erasmus is far from cheerful. He pours his sorrows into Ammonius' ears, as long ago he used to do with the faithful Batt:

> It is unnecessary to ask you to do what you do of your own accord; yet, when the opportunity offers, help my interests by your

[18] Eras. Ep. 273. [19] *Ibid.*, 280.

> own commendation. I must surely within a few months securely cast anchor; if it is successful, I will imagine this to be my own country which I preferred to Rome, and in which old age has overtaken me. If it is not successful, I will tear myself hence, and go off to die somewhere, nor deem it much matter where. I will call all the supernal powers as witnesses of the promise by which he whom you know has ruined me. For if I had in three words promised what he has so often and in such magnificent terms pledged himself for (I know what I promise, and will always fulfil it in all faith), may I die if I should not prefer to perish rather than desert a man dependent on me. I congratulate you, Ammonius, on whom, so I hear, fortune smiles kindly, and not unjustly as she does on me. Cambridge, November 26, 1513.[20]

This can only mean Mountjoy, for certainly Archbishop Warham had performed his promises. Shortly after this, however, Mountjoy came to his assistance, and thus escaped the fate of the Bishop of Cambrai, the Marchioness of Veere, and others of his patrons, once they had ceased to be of service to him. It was not what they had done that he was apt to remember, but what they had failed to do that moved him to speak of them despitefully.

The time he spent teaching at Cambridge was not a very profitable period, except in the sense that it gave him opportunity to devote himself to intensive literary work. The money rewards from his teaching were very small, and he laments the fact in another of his letters to Ammonius:

> My dear Ammonius. I have surely been leading the life of a snail for many months; and shut in and hidden away in my house, I do nothing but mutter over my studies. This is a great solitude, the most of them being away from fear of the plague; although when everybody is here it is still a solitude. The expense is intolerable, and not a penny coming in. You must consider that I am stating this by all that is sacred. I have not yet been five months here, and in that time I have spent about sixty nobles. One only I received from a few auditors, though I tried to ward it off and refuse it. Certainly I must make every effort during these winter months to heave up my anchor, to leave no stone unturned. If I succeed, I will prepare myself for a nest; but, if not, I shall surely fly away from here, but whither is uncertain. If nothing else, I can certainly die elsewhere. Cambridge, November 28, 1513.[21]

As a matter of fact, it would seem that about this time all his friends in England had fallen away from him, and we find no more pleasant references to the kindness of Colet, the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishop of Durham, or the Bishop of Rochester. Mountjoy had been ominously silent for a long time, and since the receipt of his semi-annual pension from the Archbishop there was nothing more to be expected from that quarter. We have seen where for some time he had been trying to secure

[20] *Ibid.*, 281. [21] *Ibid.*, 282.

from the Bishop of Durham or the Bishop of Winchester, or both, some sort of position or benefice, but so far ineffectually. He tells Ammonius in one of his letters that he got a reply from his lordship of Durham, "but to no purpose. When, however, I urged on him my request, with the countenance of a man who would willingly change the subject, he said, 'I think that is in the power of the Bishop of Winchester, but I am not sure,' and immediately returned to his interrupted small talk." [22] It is a matter of pure speculation as to what was the reason for this sudden abandonment of Erasmus; for in editing his letters he has guarded the secret well. Mountjoy's occupations in France can be alleged as his excuse, if one is needed; but this was not the case with the bishops and other ecclesiastics of his acquaintance. If the characters of these bishops were such as he has described them to us, if they were the pious and unostentatious men that others besides himself have said they were, then we must be permitted to think that something which Erasmus himself had done was the cause for their coolness towards him and the real reason for throwing him on his own resources. Looking over his deeds of commission, we find one thing at least that might be responsible for all this, and that is the *Praise of Folly*. Although this book had been published on the continent now two years, it evidently took considerable time in those days, when war had interrupted communications, to distribute works of literary flavor to the world at large. Besides, it took some time for the book to make its pernicious influence manifest to the authorities of the Church; and we see that it was not until 1515 that Dorp, and with him the University of Louvain, had been sufficiently alarmed to remonstrate with Erasmus on the matter. More was the only one who took up the cudgels in defense of the book, and it was quite natural that he should do so since the book was dedicated to him. More was not an ecclesiastic and he was of a liberal and jovial disposition besides; and when he saw Erasmus ridiculing monks, priests, bishops, and even the Pope he may have considered that Erasmus' sources of information on the subject were better than his own, seeing that Erasmus was one of the cloth. We know that More was obstinate in all good causes, and possibly he may have been obstinate in the matter of this book which had not as yet been passed upon by any competent ecclesiatical authority. Be this as it may, we feel that in this injudicious work, to put it mildly, lay the secret of the evident dissatisfaction of the English hierarchy with Erasmus at this particular period, and we are glad to see that in a measure Drummond coincides with us. He says:

> It may well have been that the publication of the *Praise of Folly* destroyed all his chance of preferment. How *could* a man who had said such sharp things about the Church be put into high office in it? Such is not the stuff of which bishops or even deans are made. In our own days it seems impossible to promote a man who has in any way attacked or dissented from any part of the Church doctrine or discipline, or even run counter to popular opinion in these

[22] *Idem.*

matters; and assuredly great offense would have been taken had any special favor been shown the author of the *Moria.*[23]

But the saintly old Archbishop Warham seems to have understood the character of Erasmus much better than did Erasmus himself, and he did not in this crisis forsake him. He probably concluded that the Erasmus of the *Adages* should not be sacrificed to the Erasmus of this last unfortunate book; for having heard directly from him that he was suffering miserably from an attack of the stone he sent him the following comforting letter:

> Erasmus. If we wish health at the head of our letters to those who are well, it is much more appropriate that we wish health to you who are sick. However, I augur under a happy omen that you are already cleansed of these stones, at least since we celebrated the Feast of the Purification.[24] What mean these stones in your little body, or what shall we build on such a rock? You are certainly not building magnificent temples or anything of that sort with them, I venture. Therefore, since stones are not in your line, hasten as soon as possible to rid yourself of this superfluous burden and pay for having such stones taken away, just as every day I pay for having such stones brought to my building projects. That you may be in a better position to do so, I have entrusted to the son of a certain London goldsmith ten nobles for you, and I wish they might be changed into ten legions of the same. This golden medicine holds within itself considerable efficacy; use it for your health, which I would willingly pay for at a much dearer rate. For there remain for you many famous works to publish, which you will be unable to attempt unless you get well. Look after your health, and do not by your illness deprive us of our dearest hope, and yourself of the sweetest reward of your scholarship. London, February 5, 1514.[25]

Could anything be kinder or more thoughtful than this treatment of Erasmus by the great English churchman? And by it the prelate brought out in the writer all that was best in him, and there never was a time in the long years to come, that he did not speak of the Archbishop with the utmost gratitude and sincerity. How different was the treatment that he experienced from Wolsey, who had just been appointed Bishop of Lincoln? It is true that the latter had not attained to the summit of his greatness; yet, even so, one might expect that he would show some recognition of the dedication which Erasmus had just made him at the time of which we are speaking. This dedication was prefixed to a translation of Plutarch's *De vtilitate capienda ex inimicis.*[26] However, the book was never published, though its dedication still exists in manuscript in the library of the University of Basle, which lack of publication may have been Wolsey's justification. But Wolsey must have appreciated him in a way, though not in the

[23] *Erasmus,* Vol. I, p. 239.
[24] Otherwise known as Candlemas Day, and occurring on February 2nd.
[25] Eras. Ep. 286.
[26] *On Deriving Profit from our Enemies.*

way that Erasmus would esteem very much, for he named after him two of the warships which he was fitting out for the hostile descent on France.[27]

Was not this the very irony of Fate, that to a man to whom war in any form was particularly abhorrent this honor should be given; and that when he had asked for bread from the great man he should receive a stone? We must do Wolsey the justice, however, to say that he did offer Erasmus a canonry at Tournay in France, of which place Henry VIII had through the fortune of war possessed himself. But Wolsey had deprived Louis Guillard, the quondam occupant, of his episcopal throne of Tournai; and although the Pope, at the suggestion of Henry, had given the See to Wolsey, there was no surety that Erasmus might enjoy his canonry in peace. The same reasons also made doubtful the payment of any pension that he might obtain by resigning this sinecure, as he had done in the case of his parish of Aldington. This is the reason, we think, why Wolsey eventually conferred this canonry on some one else, while making Erasmus a promise to do still better for him soon. Though Erasmus says that he was not a whit the richer by his acquaintance with Wolsey, this, we feel, must be taken in a broad sense, for he was at all times profuse in his praise of this great English ecclesiastic who at a later time made him the most flattering offers to induce him to return to England. Moreover, he dedicated to him others of his works afterwards; and we have already shown what that meant to Erasmus in recompense, either expected or received.

And now occurred an event which Erasmus had awaited and expected for a long time, namely, the death of Pope Julius II, February 21, 1513. This warlike Pontiff died in the midst of his plans for driving from Italian soil the various foreign invaders. Some of these ambitions he had achieved, but others were still unrealized at his demise. All dispassionate historians speak with considerable appreciation of this Pontiff, and, among others, Roscoe displays a spirit of judicious criticism which indicates an impartial writer. We will quote him briefly on the subject:

> Bold, enterprising, ambitious, and indefatigable, he neither sought repose himself, nor allowed it to be enjoyed by others. In searching for a vicar of Christ upon earth, it would indeed have been difficult to have found a person, whose conduct and temper were more directly opposed to the mild spirit of Christianity, and the example of its founder; but this was not the test by which the conclave judged of the qualifications of a pontiff, who was now no longer expected to seclude himself from the cares of the world, in order to attend to the spiritual concerns of his flock. Julius II is therefore not to be judged by a rule of conduct, which he neither proposed to himself, nor was expected to conform to by others.

[27] Brewer's *Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. I, 3977 and 5761, where the original entries are in Wolsey's own handwriting. The mention is made of "The Erasymus, Capt. Frogmorton" and "The Erasmus Shype, Capt. Montford."

His vigorous and active mind corresponded with the restless spirit of the times, and his good fortune raised him to an eminence from which he looked down on the proudest sovereigns of the earth. His ambition was not, however, the passion of a groveling mind, nor were the advantages which he sought to attain of a temporary or personal nature. To establish the authority of the holy see throughout Europe, to recover the dominions of the church, to expel all foreign powers, or as they were then called, barbarians, from Italy, and to restore that country to the dominion of its native princes, were the vast objects of his comprehensive mind. These objects he lived in a great degree to accomplish; and it may well be doubted whether, if he had entered on his career at an earlier period of life, he would not have carried his designs into full effect.[28]

[28] *Life and Pontificate of Leo X,* Vol. II, pp. 183-4. Philadelphia, 1806.

CHAPTER XXV

CANOSSA; DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND; LETTER TO SERVATIUS

On the 13th day of March, 1513, John Cardinal de' Medici was elected Pope and enthroned at St. Peter's, surrounded by the Conclave which had elected him, and amid the rejoicings of the people and the salvos of cannon. He had chosen the name of Leo, and was the tenth of that title, which he was destined to make famous as long as the world lasts. He was a man of thirty-eight years, of an illustrious family, and with all the charm that rank and wealth and education can impart. Although Julius II had left Italy tranquil for the time being, and Leo was able to take a leisurely survey of all matters both spiritual and temporal that at this time affected the Church, still he knew—and if he had forgotten, Louis XII would have quickly reminded him—that he had an ambitious and powerful enemy on the other side of the French border. The French monarch had by no means relinquished his designs on the possession of Milan and all the northeastern part of Italy; and though Leo was by nature pacific, he could not permit the dismembering of even the Milanese territory, knowing that this would be only the prelude to further aggression on the part of the restless French king. Therefore, in less than a month after his elevation as Pope, he had united Henry VIII, the Emperor-elect, the King of Aragon, and himself, in a league offensive and defensive against France and her allies, the most important of whom were the Venetians. By the sixth of June he had won the battle of Novara, in which the French and Venetians were routed with great slaughter; and seeing that Milan was freed from the domination of the French, and that the tranquillity of the whole peninsula was assured, he laid aside the secular arm and proceeded to suggest lenient measures to the exasperated conquerors. He addressed them a public letter, thanking them for their services, but, lamenting the dreadful loss of life that had taken place, besought them to make a moderate use of their victory. Meanwhile, pursuant to his agreement with the Pope, King Henry had passed over to France in June of this same year and had laid siege to Terouenne. The Duc de Longueville came to the relief of that town, whence resulted the famous Battle of the Spurs, when not only Terouenne, but also Tournai, fell into the hands of the English. That is how the bishopric of the latter place was given to Wolsey by the Pope, at the request of King Henry, and its former occupant Guillard ousted from it to make a vacancy, as we have just mentioned. But Leo had turned from war to the arts of peace; he devoted himself to bringing about a general cessation of hostilities between all the warring monarchs, and at last succeeded in persuading the English king to lay aside his arms, and Louis XII to permit him as

Father of the Faithful to arbitrate between him and his enemies. Learning and the Fine Arts began again to emerge from the temporary eclipse undergone during the stormy days of Julius, and the sky cleared under the beneficent influence of Leo's reign. This Pontiff's election to the Chair of St. Peter seems to have been particularly gratifying to Erasmus, who had made his acquaintance in Rome when he was yet but a Cardinal. From his rule Erasmus expected the best results for the Church at large, and incidentally for himself. His mind ran back to twelve years before, when he was asked by Antony the Abbot of St. Bertin to reply for him in his choicest Latinity to a letter which the Abbot had received from the young Cardinal de' Medici, thanking him for the hospitality that the Abbot had shown him when he was on his travels in those parts. The passing years had brought many changes since those days when Erasmus was a young and struggling student who felt himself honored at the slightest notice from the great. He had now made for himself a name that was known and appreciated wherever learning was esteemed; and he felt within himself the potentialities of greater things to come, if only this pestilential war would cease. So, filled with this thought, he indited to the Abbot a letter on war in general, which is, and ever will be, a classic on the subject. We should like to reproduce it here, but since it is very long, and since he later amplified it still more and published it in a new edition of his *Adages* under the proverb *Dulce bellum inexpertis,* we shall refer our readers to that work, promising them that they will be well repaid for the trouble.

Before we leave 1513 we must mention the publication by Dr. Reyner Snoy, one of his friends and fellow-townsmen of Gouda, of a manuscript volume of his juvenile effusions, which also contained some of the poems of his old friend William Herman. Nichols thinks that they had been preserved in the monastery at Steyn, but our impression, which is, however, only an impression, is that they had been treasured by Herman himself, and that at his death, which took place in 1510, they had passed into the keeping of Snoy, who deemed them, like everything which Erasmus had written, worthy of publication. This collection was entitled *Herasmi Roterodami Silua carminum,* and was printed May 15, 1513, at Gouda.

In April, 1514, we find a letter addressed to Erasmus by the famous John Reuchlin, equally well known to scholars by his Greek name of Capnio; but since we shall go into his relations with Erasmus later on, when the opportunity will be more appropriate, we shall reserve our account of this great German scholar until then.

As we have already said, Pope Leo X had set his heart on making peace between Louis XII of France and Henry VIII of England. For this purpose he had sent a secret legate into England, unaccompanied by any retinue and without the usual ostentation that went with such embassies. This legate was Cardinal Canossa; and at a dinner given to him by Ammonius, to which Erasmus was invited without being informed of the quality of his neighbor at table, an incident rather embarrassing to Erasmus occurred. Since de Burigni had abbreviated

the account without omitting the salient outlines, we shall reproduce it here:

> The rumor spread in London that Pope Leo X had sent a legate in disguise into England on the subject of the war between France and England. The report proved true, and the legate was Canossa, who had stopped with Ammonius *incognito*. The latter invited to dinner Erasmus, who suspected nothing. When he arrived he found with his friend a man, dressed in a long cloak, his hair combed back smoothly, and having only one attendant to serve him. Erasmus entered into conversation with Ammonius without paying much attention to this other person who was present, who was, however, Canossa. Erasmus asked his friend in Greek who he was; Ammonius replied in the same language that he was a leading merchant. "He certainly looks like it," said Erasmus, and, convinced that it was the truth, he paid scant attention to the supposed merchant. They sat down to dinner; Erasmus spoke only to Ammonius, treating Canossa with much indifference. He wanted to know if the rumor that Leo X had sent a legate to England had any foundation; Ammonius admitting that there was something in the report, Erasmus said, "The Pope had no need of my counsel, but had he consulted me I should have given him far different advice." "What would you have advised him to do?" asked Ammonius. "I should have made him understand that the proper time to treat for peace had not yet arrived, because peace cannot be brought about suddenly; and that as soon as there is a question of treating for peace the soldiery abandons all discipline; that it would have been better to prepare a truce for three years, during which period they would have time enough to make a lasting treaty." Ammonius approved of these sentiments, and added, "But I believe that is the object of the legate's journey." "Is he a Cardinal?" asked Erasmus. "He has the wit of one," said Ammonius. "Well, that is something," said Erasmus laughingly. During all this conversation Canossa had kept silent, but finally spoke a few words in Italian, mingling therewith some Latin words, which caused Erasmus to suspect that this pretended merchant was a man of culture. He was much more surprised however, when Canossa, turning towards him but still without disclosing his identity, said "I am astonished that a man like you is determined to live amongst these barbarians, unless it be that you prefer to be the only one of your class here rather than to be the first at Rome." Erasmus, astounded to hear such a sentiment emanating from the mouth of a man whom he still took to be a merchant, replied that he lived in a kingdom having a great number of learned men; that he much preferred to occupy the lowest rank there than to live in Rome without any consideration whatsoever. Erasmus returned home without the slightest suspicion of the mission of this person with whom he had dined. Some days after that, Ammonius disclosed the mystery to him, and counseled him to go back to

Rome with Canossa, who was very favorably disposed to him; but Erasmus had no desire to do so. He reproached his friend, who knew the liberty that he was accustomed to use in his remarks, for having exposed him to the hazard of uttering many things which might have displeased a legate of the Pope; but Canossa, far from having been displeased with the free and independent tone of Erasmus, did him all the friendly offices in his power, and conceived for him an active liking, which he maintained as long as he lived.[1]

This meeting between Erasmus and Canossa took place some time in June, 1514, at a time when Erasmus had decided that little or nothing was to be gained by any longer stay in England. He had some promises of assistance on the continent, particularly in his own native Holland, and had resolved to see what such prospects as he had in mind amounted to. But besides this he had some works to publish, which could not very well be done at that time in England; we allude especially to his Epistles of St. Jerome and his translation of the New Testament from the Greek. So he bade his English friends farewell, promising, however, that he would return, and inviting them to continue their many kindnesses in his behalf. He crossed the much dreaded Channel, which always extorted from him a most vigorous anathema, both on account of his poor sailor-like qualities and by reason of the rapacity of the custom-house officers. On landing, he first called on Lord Mountjoy, who was still governor of Hammes Castle; but we shall let him tell his own story as it occurs in his narrative of the trip sent back to Ammonius at London.

I am not sure whether or not I told you about paying my parting respects to the king. He received me in the most friendly manner, from which circumstance his lordship of Lincoln [Wolsey] bade me to rest in the most assured hope. But neither did he himself remember about the gift; nor did I dare to suggest it, lest I might seem importunate. His lordship of Durham[2] gave me six nobles on my departure, and this of his own accord, making his fourth gift to me, unless I am mistaken. The Archbishop, having sought a suitable opportunity, added the same amount, and his lordship of Winchester [Foxe] gave me a rose-noble. This is the sum of all the wealth I am carrying away. I wanted you to know this lest someone might imagine that I had scraped together a large amount of money under the pretext of this departure of mine.

I am at present staying at Hammes Castle with my friend Mountjoy for a few days; then I will go to Germany, calling upon a few friends on the way. If fortune shall respond to my wishes and the promises of others shall materialize, I will hasten my return; if not, I will make my plans according to the circumstances of the case. May God grant that, having safely returned, I may meet my Ammonius not only safe, but also adorned with the choicest gifts of fortune. Whenever an occasion shall fall out for promoting

[1] *Vie d'Érasme*, Vol. I, pp. 207-10.
[2] Ruthall. His immediate successor was Tunstall.

the interests of your Erasmus, I make no doubt you will help me in my absence, just as you have always done in the past, whether I was absent or present. Farewell, dearest friend. July 8, 1514.[3]

And then the expected happened. While staying at Hammes with Mountjoy, in order to recover from the effects of the trip across the Channel, he was handed a letter that had been wandering about for several weeks. It was from Servatius, the prior of his old monastery at Steyn, suggesting that he should return to the community, reminding him that he had laid aside the habit of his Order, expressing fears for the salvation of his soul, telling him that he ought to desire to die amongst his brethren, urging him to remember that his constant wanderings were not conducive to a spiritual life, and finishing with a promise to use his influence towards finding for him a position in the Order with emoluments attached thereto sufficient to furnish him the opportunity and the leisure to follow his literary avocations. It was a kindly letter, couched in the language of friendship, as we glean from Erasmus' reply, and showing not so much the authority of the prior as the pleading of the friend. The monks at Steyn were now undoubtedly proud of the fame and achievements of their wandering brother, and naturally longed to see him; and even possibly sought a chance to shine in his reflected glory. This was the most important letter that he had ever received; and though unwelcome was certainly not unexpected, for he had looked for its coming any time these many years past, and had resolved in his own mind how the situation was to be coped with when it did arrive. He was well aware that no man living knew him as Servatius did, for they had enjoyed the same friendships, had entered the monastery of Steyn and had been novices together, had broken the rules of the community by writing to each other surreptitiously—since conversation was forbidden them except at set times—and had in other ways infringed the ordinances of the monastery until at last Servatius, who had not the daring spirit of Erasmus, realizing that their conduct was opposed to the essence of the monastic profession, refused to endanger any further his religious vocation. For six years longer they dwelt together in the same monastery of Steyn, each living his life according to his desires. What those of Erasmus were we know very well; what were the aspirations of Servatius we cannot say, but we must conclude from the fact that he finally became the prior of Steyn when he was only about forty, that he had devoted himself to realizing his vocation and had been elected to positions of influence and responsibility in his Order. But silly passages had occurred between them in their young monastic days, of which both were heartily ashamed now that they were mature men, and of which both would willingly blot out the remembrance. That Erasmus was the most to blame is sufficiently evident from the admissions that he made to Servatius in this very letter, but that he manfully overcame his weaknesses in this regard is equally evident.[4] We

[3] Eras. Ep. 295.

[4] Allen, in Appendix IV of Vol. I, gives an extended synopsis of the whole affair, which is important as showing the attitude of each to the other on this occasion.

are always at a disadvantage in dealing with people who have seen and known us in our moments of moral weakness.[5] This was now the position of Erasmus in dealing with Servatius' lettter. Hence we see that in Erasmus' reply there were no rhetorical flourishes, no quotations from the classics, no attempt to carry off his case by impressing Servatius with his great learning; all of which implies that he recognized in the prior a mind too keen to be obfuscated by what was purely extraneous, and that he must consequently deal with the facts alone. We deem it best to give the letter in full:

> Most kindly father. Your letter, tossed about in the hands of many, at last came to me just as I had left England; and it certainly gave me extreme pleasure because it still breathed of your ancient affection for me. I will reply briefly, however, because I am writing this on a journey, and will refer in particular to those matters which you mention as pertaining to the question at issue. So various are the opinions of men, each looking to his own interests, that it is impossible all should be satisfied; but as God is my witness, I am certainly desirous of doing whatever shall be in the event for the very best. For if formerly I was actuated by the feelings of youth, increasing age in some measure, and experience in like degree, have corrected that. It was never my design to change my mode of life or my religious profession; not that I approved of them, but so that I might not cause scandal to others. You know that by the pertinacity of my guardians and by the bad advice of others, I was compelled rather than persuaded to adopt that kind of life, and bound to it thereafter by the reproaches of Cornelius Woerden, and by a certain boyish shame, although I knew that that sort of life was not in any way suitable for me, for all things do not suit all men. I always stood fasting badly, and this on account of some sort of bodily defect. Once aroused from slumber, I was never able to go to sleep again until after several hours. My mind was so turned in the direction of literature, a thing not cultivated there, that I make no doubt, if I had chanced on some more liberal mode of life, I might have been numbered not only among the lucky ones, but also among the good.
>
> So, when I perceived that I was in no way suited to that sort of life, and that I had undertaken it by compulsion and not of my own free will, yet because it has been considered by the public opinion of our times to be a sacrilege to withdraw from this sort of life once it is adopted, I decided to endure this part of my misfortune bravely. For you know that I have been unfortunate in many ways. But I always deemed this worse than anything else, that I was pushed into a sort of life from which I was alien in soul and body—in soul, because I disliked ceremonial and liked my own freedom—in body, because even if the kind of life were ever so pleasing to me, my bodily constitution could not endure such tasks.

[5] What these were in the case of Erasmus we have sufficiently indicated on page 45.

But someone will say, "What about the year of probation (as they call it), and the age of maturity?" That is ridiculous. As if one should demand that a boy in his seventeenth year, especially educated to literature, should know himself, which is a great thing in an old man; or as if he could learn in one year what many grey-haired men do not yet understand. Although I myself have never approved such a procedure, and all the less since I have had the personal experience, yet it was by these very means, as I have just related, that I was ensnared. Nevertheless, I admit that anyone who is really good will continue to be good in any method of life. Nor do I deny that I have been addicted to great vices; yet my nature was not to that degree corrupt that if a proper and truly Christian director, one not too judicially exacting, had been near me, I could not have been led into better ways.

Therefore I cast about meanwhile to see in what sort of life I might be least wicked, and I consider that I have surely accomplished that; for I have lived among sober people, and have occupied myself in the study of literature, which has reclaimed me from many vices. It has been permitted me to contract friendships with men who know Christ truly, and by whose conversation I have become better. I do not boast at all about my books, which you perhaps despise, but by the reading of which many declare themselves not only to have been made more educated, but also better men. The desire for money never attracted me, nor am I affected by the wish for glory. Although formerly I was inclined to pleasures, I never was a slave to them. Wine-bibbing and drunkenness I always detested and avoided. As often as I meditated on associating myself once more with you, there recurred to my mind the envy of many of you, and the contempt of everybody, how dull, how tasteless, and how far from savoring of Christ was the conversation and how unmonastic the meals; in a word, the entire routine of the life, from which if you take away the ceremonial, I fail to see what you have left that is desirable. Finally, there recurred to my mind the frailness of my health, so increased by age, sickness, and hard work, that I could no longer satisfy you, and would only destroy myself. For some years past I am subject to the gravel, a surely severe and mortal disease. For some years past also I drink only wine, and this only of certain kinds, compelled thereto by my malady. I cannot bear every sort of food, nor even every kind of climate, for this disease of mine recurs very easily, and demands the greatest moderation in my mode of living; and I know the Dutch climate, and I know too how you eat, not to say anything at all about your customs. So that if I were to return to you I would have accomplished nothing except to cause trouble to you and death to myself.

But perhaps you deem it a great happiness to die among the brethren? Now such a belief deceives you, and is an imposition not only on yourself, but on almost everybody; for we are then making the Christian religion to consist in place, in manner of life,

in food, and in certain little ceremonies. We deem him to be ruined who has changed a white habit for a black one, or who has turned his cowl into a cap, or who shall have changed his abode from time to time. I dare venture to say that a great destruction of Christian piety has arisen from the establishment of these "Religious Orders," as they style them, although they were perhaps at first instituted for a pious purpose. But little by little they increased and scattered themselves into six thousand kinds. The authority of the Supreme Pontiffs, too easy and indulgent in many ways, assisted them. For what is more disgraceful or more impious than some of these Orders which have become relaxed? And if you regard those of them that are admired, yea, even the most admired, I know not what sort of a conception of Christ you will find in them, beyond certain dull and exacting ceremonies. With these they please themselves, and according to these they judge and condemn others. How much more is it in accord with the sentiments of Christ to consider the whole Christian world as one house, and even as one monastery, to regard all men as fellow-canons and fellow-brethren, to deem the sacrament of baptism the highest Order, nor to care where you live but only how well you live! You desire to fix for me a permanent abode, which my advancing years suggest. But the journeying about of Solon, of Pythagoras, and of Plato, was praised; the Apostles, especially Paul, wandered about. St. Jerome, a monk also, was now at Rome, now in Syria, now at Antioch, now here, now there; and even when his head was grey pursued sacred literature.

I admit that I must not be compared with him; however, I have never changed my place of residence unless compelled thereto by the pest, or by reason of my studies, or on account of my health; and wherever I have lived (let me speak of myself perhaps boastfully yet truly), I have been esteemed by the most excellent, and praised by the most admired. Nor is there any country, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, England, or Scotland, which does not invite me to its hospitality. And if I am not esteemed by everybody (which I do not aim at), I certainly please the highest of all. At Rome there was no Cardinal who did not receive me as his brother, although I made no effort to bring this about; and among these I may particularly mention the Cardinal of St. George, the Cardinal of Bologna, Cardinal Grimani, the Cardinal of Nantes, and even him who is now the Supreme Pontiff, not to say a word about bishops, archdeacons, and scholars. And such honor was given not to my wealth, of which I have none and desire none, nor to my adulation from which I was ever most free, but to my learning only, which our fellow-countrymen laugh at, but the Italians adore. In England there is no bishop who does not feel glad to be addressed by me, who does not desire me as his guest, or who is unwilling to have me of his household. Their king himself, just before the death of his father, wrote to me with his own hand a most affectionate letter when I was in Italy; and often

now he speaks of me most honorably and most lovingly; and as often as I salute him, he embraces me most kindly and regards me with the most friendly eyes, so that you may perceive that he thinks of me not less well than he speaks of me. Often, too, he has requested his almoner to look about for a benefice for me. The queen has endeavored to obtain my services as her preceptor. Everyone knows that, if I would agree to dwell in the royal palace for a few months, I could acquire all the benefices that I wish; but I esteem all this of less account than my leisure and my studious labors. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and Chancellor of that kingdom, a man who is learned and esteemed, treats me in such a way that, if he were my father or brother, he could not be more affectionate. And that you may know him to be sincere in this, he has given me a benefice of almost a hundred nobles, which, at my request, he afterwards changed into a pension of one hundred crowns on my resigning the benefice; and in addition, he has made me presents of more than four hundred nobles during the last few years, and all this without my ever asking him for it. He gave me in one day one hundred and fifty nobles. From other bishops I have received over a hundred nobles offered me by their gratuitous generosity. Lord Mountjoy, a baron of that kingdom, my pupil formerly, gives me a yearly pension of a hundred crowns. The king, and the Bishop of Lincoln, who now by means of his influence with the king is powerful, make magnificent promises to me. There are two Universities here, Oxford and Cambridge, both of which strive to have me; for I taught Greek and Sacred Literature at Cambridge, but gratis, since that is the rule there. There are colleges there in which there is so much of the religious life, so much modesty of demeanor, that there is no religious Order which you would not disdain in comparison, if you were to see them. There is at London Father John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, a man who combines with the highest learning the most admirable piety, and whose influence is weighty with everyone. This man loves me so, as everybody knows, that with no one would he more willingly live than with myself; but I shall omit innumerable others, lest I become doubly annoying by my boasting and my loquacity.

Now to say a little about my works. I assume that you have read my *Enchiridion,* by means of which not a few people declare themselves to have been inflamed with a love of piety. I arrogate nothing to myself, but congratulate Christ, if through me any good accrues to anyone from His gifts to me. I know not whether you have seen my book of *Adages* printed by Aldus. True, it is not a religious work, but it is one most useful to all learning, and certainly cost me immeasurable toil and loss of sleep. I have published a book entitled *De rerum verborumque copia,* which I have dedicated to my friend Colet, a work most useful to those who are to preach; but those who despise all good literature will despise this. During these last two years, besides many other

things, I have corrected the Epistles of St. Jerome; what is not genuine or has become interpolated I have scored with an *obelus,* and I have illumined what is obscure with *scholia.* From a comparison of the Greek and the ancient codices I have corrected the whole New Testament, and have annotated over a thousand passages, not without profit to theologians. I have undertaken to comment on the Epistles of St. Paul, which I shall finish when I have published the former book. For indeed it has been settled that I shall die amid the Sacred Writings. In that work I spend my leisure and my labor. Great men tell me that I am strong in those things wherein others are weak; in your sort of life I should avail nothing. Although I am friendly with so many learned and influential men, both here and in Italy and France as well, I have never yet found anyone who advises me to betake myself back to you, or who would deem it to be the better course. Even Father Nicholas Werner of blessed memory, who preceded you, was always wont to dissuade me from such a course, advising me rather to attach myself to some bishop, and adding that he knew both my disposition and the customs of his dear little brethren, for such were the words he used in the vernacular. In the sort of life in which I am now engaged, I see what I ought to avoid; but what I had better follow, I do not see.

Now there remains that I should satisfy you as to my dress. Previously, I always followed the style of the canons [Augustinian], and when I was at Louvain I obtained permission to use without scruple of conscience the linen scapulary instead of an entire linen habit, and a black cape instead of a black cloak, as is the custom at Paris. When, however, I went to Italy, and everywhere saw that the canons wore a black habit with the scapulary, in order not to offend them with the novelty of my dress, I began to wear a black habit with the scapulary. Afterwards the pest broke out at Bologna, and those who look after the plague-stricken victims there wear a white linen garment hanging from the shoulder according to their custom, and avoid the proximity of men. When I was one day going to visit a certain learned friend, some scoundrels with drawn swords prepared to attack me, and would have done so had not a matron of the vicinity warned them that I was an ecclesiastic. On another day, when I was going to visit the sons of the Treasurer [Jerome Laurin], they fell upon me from all sides with sticks and attacked me with the worst revilings. So, admonished by prudent men, I hid my scapulary, and obtained permission from Pope Julius II to use or not use the dress of my Order as I saw fit, provided I wore a priest's habit, and if there had been anything culpable in the matter previously he pardoned all that in his brief. In Italy, therefore, I continued in priestly dress lest a change therein might give scandal to anyone. Afterwards, when I returned to England, I decided to wear my accustomed dress, and, having summoned to my house a certain friend of the highest reputation both in his life and in his learning,

I showed him the dress which I had decided to use, and asked him if it were suitable in England. He gave it his approbation, and so I wore it in public. Immediately I was warned by other friends of mine that England would not permit such a dress, and that I should conceal it. I concealed it, and because it cannot be thus concealed without at times being seen, and thus begetting scandal, I have placed it in my baggage, and have used the former permission of the Sovereign Pontiff ever since. The pontifical decrees excommunicate him who has cast aside the habit of his Order that he may the more freely mingle with people of the world. I was compelled to lay it aside in Italy in order not to be killed; then I was obliged to lay it aside in England because it could not be tolerated there, much as I would have preferred to wear it. And now at length, to put it on again would beget more scandal than the laying of it aside has caused.

You have here the complete account of my life, and you have my reasons. I desire very much to change this mode of living if I shall see anything better; but I do not see what I can do in Holland. I know that I cannot accustom myself to the climate nor to the food, and I shall attract to myself the observation of everybody. I who went away as a young man would return a grey-haired and sickly old man; and having been accustomed to be honored by the highest I should be exposed to the contempt of the lowest; and exchange my studies for drinking bouts. As to your promise that you will assist me in seeking out a residence where I may be able to enjoy the greatest emoluments, as you write, I cannot imagine what that could be, unless perchance you place me with some nuns, and I who have never been willing to serve either archbishops or kings must serve women. I care nothing for emoluments, nor do I wish to grow rich, provided only that Fortune may furnish me with health and sufficient leisure for literature, and that I may be a burden to none. And would that we could speak of these matters face to face, for by letter it cannot be done either safely or satisfactorily. For although your letter was despatched by safe hands, yet it has so wandered about that, had I not by accident betaken myself hither to this castle, I should never have seen it, and I have only received it now after it has been previously perused by others. Therefore, write nothing to me of a private nature unless you are really sure of my place of abode, and have secured a most trustworthy messenger. I am now bound for Germany, that is to Basle, where I am about to publish my writings, and shall perhaps spend the winter in Rome. On my return I will see to it that we can talk together somewhere, but now the summer is almost past and the journey long. I knew from Sasboud and his wife about the death of William, Francis, and Andreas. Give my earnest regards to Father Henry and all the rest of them who live with you, towards whom I entertain the feelings that I ought. For I impute my early tragedies to my errors, or (if you wish) to my destiny. The letter you wrote me three

days after Easter I received on July 7th. I beg you in your pious supplications not to cease to commend my salvation to Christ, for the which object, if I knew for certain that it would be better for me to return to your community, I would prepare myself for the journey this very day. Farewell, my most gentle companion of the olden days, now my most reverend father.

From the Castle of Hammes near Calais, July 8, 1514.[6]

We meet here again the old familiar argument that he had been forced to become a monk. Since we have dealt with this matter previously, we will not take up the matter now except to say with Drummond that "one cannot help perceiving that he has made the most of his case. . . . Possibly his resistance was scarcely so determined, or his feelings so strong, as he chose afterwards to represent them."[7]

It has been definitely ascertained that he was twenty-one at his entry into the monastic life at Steyn, and twenty-two when he took his final vows. Whether he had so often rehearsed the fact that a boy of seventeen does not know his own mind, which is true, that he had ended by concluding that to have been his own age at the time of his profession, is uncertain; but it is evident that he desired to make Servatius think so.[8] When he says that money or fame have no attractions for him, he makes a strong point in the mind of Servatius, no doubt, for such abnegation is something which the prior could understand and appreciate. But we who have in these letters of Erasmus sources of information about his habits, hopes, and ideals, which Servatius naturally never enjoyed, might tell a different story. That he was no wine-bibber is surely borne out by his industry; but that he loved a glass of good wine as well as any monk that ever lived is equally true. That he had thrown aside the habit of his Order, that he had abandoned the monastic life, that he had wandered far and wide without any fixed habitation, and that he had eaten, drunk, and dressed to suit himself regardless of his vows, these charges he skilfully parried with the counter-charge that the people of his day were attaching too much importance to such trifles, and were making them take the place of true religion. Look out, worthy prior, for now you see the defendant has become the prosecuting attorney, and you must defend the case of true religion *versus* ceremonial. There was doubtless just enough of truth in this statement to make Servatius pause for a moment; but whether or not it was enough to make him forget all of Erasmus' disregard for his solemn obligations is a point that we shall never know.

But to our mind the strangest part of this whole letter is the statement that his fellow-countrymen derided literary studies, while the Italians, on the contrary, adored them. He was here doing a singular injustice to Holland, which certainly did not deserve it. It is true that the various provinces of the Netherlands reacted to humanistic influences a different periods, but the same was true of all countries. The dukes of Brabant at that time ruled the Netherlands, of which

[6] Eras. Ep. 296. [7] *Erasmus*, Vol. I, p. 21 [8] Eras. Ep., Appendix II.

Brabant formed a component part; and in the University of Louvain the Dutch people found ample opportunities for higher education and were not slow to avail themselves of them. And even their other schools, such as Deventer and Hertzogenbosch, were developing a host of scholars who were destined to make their mark on the coming age; and when within the same century the inhabitants of Leyden showed their love of education by accepting from the hands of William of Orange the offer of a new university in preference to a mitigation of their taxes, they were showing no new or unexpected phase of their nature. The *Brothers of the Common Life* had worked to good purpose in sowing the seed for the crop that was to follow later from the Universities of Louvain, Leyden, and Utrecht; and when Erasmus says that his fellow-countrymen were ignorant and besotted he is exaggerating enormously. With him, however, ignorance was a relative term. A man might be a good scholar in the ordinary lines of study followed in the monastery schools, which were practically the only schools at that period; but if he could not converse in Latin and Greek, and did not desire to acquire such knowledge, then he was stupid, crass, ignorant, and many other things. We ought not to forget that it was himself who informed us of the activities of the *Brothers of the Common Life,* and that there was not a spot anywhere that they had not appropriated for the establishing of their schools.[9] We of these later generations have been wrongly taught to believe that Europe lay enshrouded in black night, as far as education was concerned, until the revival of learning dispersed the darkness. We have been wont to speak flippantly and superciliously of the Dark Ages, forgetting that the Universities of Paris and Bologna and Louvain, of Oxford and Cambridge, of Prague and Heidelberg, of Padua and Salamanca, and others too numerous to mention here, were shedding their beneficent influence abroad during all this period of so-called ignorance. And not to the few alone was the opportunity given to obtain the best in education and culture, but to the many, including even the indigent; and in those days to be a needy scholar was not a source of humiliation, since the crowds that sat at the feet of the professors were made up mainly of the poor and needy. It is worthy of remembrance that the numbers attending some of these universities at times exceeded twenty thousand students. No man can read Rashdall's monumental work on the *Universities of the Middle Ages* without being struck by the widespread desire for education as manifested in the vast numbers that attended the public lectures of the universities. So, before Erasmus makes us believe that his countrymen were "crass, ignorant, and besotted," he must explain to us the presence of Gerard Groot, of Thomas à Kempis, of John Wessel, of Sintheim, of Sixtin, of Adrian of Utrecht, and a host of other learned and cultured Netherlanders of that time.

Then he proceeds to astonish the simple prior by casually mentioning the names of all the great men whom he met in Rome, especially

[9] See Epistle to Grunnius, page 12.

emphasizing how so many of the Cardinals insisted on cultivating his acquaintance and sought the pleasure of his friendship.

It is with very laudable pride that he mentions the books he has written, and here certainly he is on solid ground. He tells of the *Enchiridion,* the *Adages,* the *De duplici copia rerum ac verborum,* the *Epistles of St. Jerome,* the *New Testament,* and his labors on the *Epistles of St. Paul,* and all this with becoming modesty; but we look in vain for the slightest allusion to the most famous of all his works up to this time, namely, the *Praise of Folly.* It is quite possible that this book had not yet come to the notice of the Prior Servatius on account of its very recent issue. If such were the case, it would have been the height of folly to even mention to the prior a book in which monks were very generally held up to the worst sort of ridicule; and we feel sure that Erasmus had taken extreme care not to offend his old friend by sending him a presentation copy of that work. Again we note the omission, but leave the explanation to each reader's judgment.

And now we come to his reason for laying aside his habit. This was always considered by the laws governing every Order a very grave matter, and of so rare an occurrence that such a breach of monastic custom was almost unheard of. We who have followed his life thus far know his real reason was his desire to be rid once for all of everything pertaining to the monastic profession, but naturally he could not give that reason to Servatius. Hence he had taken what had probably happened to him on some dark evening in Bologna, when he was mistaken casually for a plague attendant, and, polishing and embellishing the incident until it really began to appeal to himself as a potent and efficient excuse for what he had previously resolved to do in any case, he had multiplied the hazards and magnified the dangers which a continued wearing of his habit might cause him, and had adopted it as his sufficient justification. Most of his biographers reject the authenticity of the Bologna incident entirely; but we see no reason to doubt that it happened in some such way as we have here outlined. And it might well serve to satisfy the unreflecting, especially as it was said to have occurred in a strange city during the dreaded plague. No one could say that it had not happened, and that fact Erasmus was aware of. But when we consider that Bologna was on the main highway between northern Europe and Rome, that all monks of every Order had to travel mostly on foot, that the people of Bologna were consequently well acquainted with the different habits worn by the German, French, and other monks who passed through their streets on their way to visit the Eternal City, and that the habit of the Canons Regular, being extremely common, must have been well known to the Bolognese, we begin to entertain doubts about the occurrence as related by Erasmus.

Lastly, he says that he could not stand the climate or the food of Holland. That is true. He was not of the stuff from which the heroes of Christianity were made. A mission to tropical Africa or to icy Labrador would hardly have appealed to him, though souls were

to be saved there too. He loved too much his own comfort and, as far as we have yet seen, was not endowed with the spirit of sacrifice. But we must take him as he was, simply a great writer who made no claims to sanctity. Let us not be too exacting; yet, too, let us not allow him to impose upon our credulity. We are glad that Prior Servatius did not insist on his return to the monastery, for it would have been a lamentable mistake. Instead of writing his great works, he would have nursed his obsessions and eaten his heart out in useless regrets. We are almost inclined to feel that the prior yielded to him, not account of his reasonings, but in spite of them, seeing that in the hopeless task of trying to make a saint of him he would only succeed in spoiling a great genius. In any case, henceforth we never hear of any further interference on the part of the worthy prior.

CHAPTER XXVI

TRIUMPHAL PROGRESS TO BASLE: FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

After parting with Mountjoy at Hammes Castle, he pursued his journey by St. Omer, where he called on his old friend the Abbot of St. Bertin; thence towards Ghent, on the road to which town he had an attack of lumbago, an account of which he sends back to Mountjoy:

> Hail, best of Maecenases. I have just spent two days with the Abbot, and we passed the time very pleasantly. He dismissed me with a present, and made me further promises most affectionately. So when everything was going well, behold, that instant Fortune abandoned me, and taught me that no reliance must be placed on a continuance of her favors. Scarcely had I left a certain inn, which lies about half way between Roulers and Ghent, when my horse shied at some white clothes which were spread on the grass, and while I was bent over to say something to my servant the animal bounded in the opposite direction, and so twisted the end of my spine that I was immediately compelled to cry out, so intolerable was the pain. I tried to dismount, but I could not; so my servant placed me on the ground by allowing me to lean on him, while the pain continued atrociously, especially if I bent over. I suffered less when erect, but I could not straighten up when once I had assumed a bent posture. There I was in the open country, with no inn to go to but one which was most cold and uninviting, and I was six long miles from Ghent. I felt the pain less in walking, and yet it was too long a journey for even a sound man to accomplish on foot. Imagine my state of mind. I made a vow to St. Paul to finish my commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, if I could only get out of this fix. A little while after this, I was driven in desperation to try whether or not I could mount my horse, and succeeded beyond my expectation; I amble slowly, and find I can bear it; I order the servant to go a little more quickly, and still stand it well, but not entirely without pain. Well, I reach Ghent, dismount, and get to my room; but thereupon the pain starts all over again, especially after the lull. I cannot stand except when supported on either side in an erect position, and firmly; for, if I bend over to the slightest degree, then that intolerable pain returns. Nor could I sit up, and when lying down I could not move at all. I send for the doctor and apothecary. I was so done up in every way that I thought of nothing but death.
>
> In the morning, while preparing to relieve nature, I try to get out of bed, and am successful; I stand, I move, I sit, and without

assistance. I give thanks to God and St. Paul. There remains still a slight soreness, particularly if I twist myself. So I stayed at Ghent for a few days at the entreaty of my friends, and being persuaded thereto by the soreness, from which I am not yet free. Whatever it was, it was no common ailment.

I met here the President of Flanders, who is a most accomplished person in every kind of learning; and also two members of the Council, Anthony Clava and William de Waele, for I knew De Keysere and some of the others previously. From here I go to Antwerp, if my bodily condition will permit; but wherever I am I shall let you know about my health. . . .

At Bergen I paid my respects to the Prince of Veere and his mother; but I found the former much preoccupied, for his wife was very sick in childbed, and the news from Zeeland was very disquieting. I also saluted him on your behalf, and reminded him of your kindnesses towards his subjects. I arrived in Basle on the day after the Assumption [August 15].[1] Germany has received me with such honors that it almost makes me blush to speak of them. Now, shut in with the German stoves, I attend to the publishing of my trifles, hurrying no less in this than Caesar did in storming the Venetians. I shall hasten my return as much as possible. God grant that I shall see you all in safety again. Basle, August 30, 1514.[2]

He has described above his attack of lumbago, a local form of muscular rheumatism, with classical accuracy; and, it is, as he says, a very painful affection. He stood physical discomforts but poorly, and was always in terror of death. We have already seen how the plague held such real terrors for him that he would fly almost to the ends of the earth to get out of reach of contagion, and to accomplish this would hesitate at no monetary sacrifice. So, when he made his vow to St. Paul for assistance in his attack of lumbago, it was sincerely meant. Drummond seems to doubt his sincerity in making this vow, but we have not the slightest hesitation in saying that he meant it from the bottom of his heart, so great was his fear, and in this was only reflecting the faith of his contemporaries in the Communion of Saints as an accepted article of Catholic belief. Seebohm reminds us that Queen Katherine and Sir Arthur Plantagenet had both made the pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham within the last two years of these very events, the Queen in thanksgiving for her victory over the Scots, and the knight in order to fulfil a vow made when he was in danger of shipwreck.[3]

Every man and woman in those days had the liveliest confidence in the active interposition of the saints in their behalf; and if we emphasize the fact here, it is not to invite controversy, but simply to exhibit

[1] He really said the day after the Annunciation, but this is clearly a lapse of memory, and I agree with Allen and Drummond in assigning his arrival to the day after the Feast of the Assumption.

[2] Eras. Ep. 301.

[3] *Oxford Reformers*, p. 272.

this phase of Erasmus' character, which in this respect did not differ from that of his neighbors.

And now we must take up his early correspondence with John Reuchlin, to whom we adverted on a previous page. Reuchlin was, like Erasmus, a humanist, but, besides perfecting himself in Latin and Greek, when he was about thirty-eight years old he had become interested in the study of Hebrew, which was a branch of learning that had not up to that time attracted much attention from scholars. He had made the acquaintance of Jacob Jehiel Loens, a learned Jew, who was court physician to Friedrich III, and from him had gained considerable knowledge of the language, which he vastly increased during a whole year's stay in Rome, where he put himself under the tuition of the most accurate Jewish scholars there to be found. His great progress emboldened him to publish in 1506 a Hebrew grammar, from which event may be dated the scientific study of Hebrew in Germany. In 1509 he met a converted Jew named Pfefferkorn, and from that time, and during many years, he was immersed in trials and tribulations which were brought on him by this man. Converts to any religion, if sincere, are generally more zealous and earnest in forwarding the interests of their new faith than are those who have received the same faith as an inheritance from their parents. This was probably the motive by which Pfefferkorn was actuated, rather than by any really malignant desire to hurt Reuchlin. The facts of the case were these. Pfefferkorn had obtained from the Emperor Maximilian I an order compelling all Jews in the Empire to give up their books to be examined by him, and empowering him to burn all such books as to him might seem inimical to Christianity. The undertaking was so vast that Pfefferkorn had to seek help for himself in the affair, and sought Reuchlin's assistance along with that of others. Now Reuchlin sought to avoid this, as he was not in entire sympathy with the proceeding; but he was eventually involved in it by receiving an order from the Emperor to present a memoir on the question of burning the books in question. He wrote the memoir, which was far from pleasing to Pfefferkorn, since Reuchlin openly declared such a measure to be absurd, and so advised the Emperor. Pfefferkorn inserted Reuchlin's pamphlet in a work of his own called the *Handspiegel,* where he poured out the most bitter and acrid invectives on both Reuchlin and his pamphlet. Reuchlin became irritated in turn, and answered this with his work entitled the *Augenspiegel,* in which he handled Pfefferkorn without gloves. Then the University of Cologne took a hand in the affair and appointed a committee from its theological faculty to examine the orthodoxy of Reuchlin's *Augenspiegel,* under the leadership of the Dominican inquisitor Hoogstraaten, who soon espoused the side of Pfefferkorn. This committee found what they considered to be forty-three dangerous propositions in the *Augenspiegel,* upon which Hoogstraaten became Reuchlin's accuser. Reuchlin appealed to the Pope, who thereupon appointed the Bishop of Spires to hear both sides and render judgment. The Bishop associated with himself several grave and learned men to form a court of trial, and after mature deliberation fully acquitted Reuchlin and sentenced Hoogstraaten to pay the costs of court, which

amounted to one hundred and eleven gulden. But this was not the end of the matter, for Hoogstraaten also appealed to the Pope, who then formed another court to sit under the presidency of Archbishop Benignus di Salviatis; this court also gave Reuchlin an entire acquittal on July 2, 1516. At the time when Erasmus arrived in Basle, which was in August, 1514, Reuchlin had just won his first verdict over Hoogstraaten; and it was for this reason that Erasmus wrote him as follows:

> Your letter, together with the verdict of acquittal by the Bishop of Spires, reached me while I was in England. I have shared its contents with a few learned friends, all of whom admire your happy and fertile genius. They enjoyed it very much, and have earnestly requested to see the condemned book, concluding that the thing must have been most excellent to displease such men as it has. Among these friends of mine are the Bishop of Rochester, a man of remarkable integrity of life and a most finished theologian, and John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's at London. I had a slight doubt that you might have written something without due reflection, because I observed that the verdict of the Bishop [of Spires] was somewhat cautiously and timidly worded in alluding to "open heresy," and "in addition to the treatise," until having obtained your book at Mainz I read those passages which are "heretical, impious, and lacking in reverence," and then I could not restrain my laughter. But after I had read your finely written denunciation [of Hoogstraaten] I also gave you the verdict, and this in place of an apology on my part, and I all the more wished that it could fall into the hands of every educated man. Moreover, just as soon as I had read your defense, written with such readiness, such confidence, such a storm of eloquence, such acumen, and such a varied richness of learning, at once I seemed to be listening, not to a defendant pleading for himself, but to a victor triumphing over his scattered enemies. One thing alone, my Capnio, I could have wished for, to speak candidly and as a friend, that is, that you had been more sparing of your digressions into those commonplaces, or at least, that you had dwelt on them less, and that you had abstained more from open abuse. But if the former is a fault, it is a fault of a man overflowing with erudition and love of literature; and as for the latter, it is difficult for me to prescribe a limit for another man's vexation. You will be doing a most agreeable thing if you see to it that your pamphlet shall be dispatched to England, either to John, Bishop of Rochester, or to John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's. I also will send thither my own copy if I am able, although it is my only one.
>
> I have written annotations on the whole of the New Testament. It is also my intention to see to the printing of the New Testament in Greek, with my own annotations added. They say that you have an eminently correct copy of this [New Testament in Greek], and if you would lend it to John Froben you will do a favor not only to him and to me, but also to all the studious. Your copy,

intact and unstained, will be returned to you. Farewell, and write again.

To the letter which you sent me to England I have replied, but whether you received it or not I know not. I shall await a letter from you. Again farewell, the sole honor and incomparable ornament of entire Germany. I was greatly desirous of speaking with you personally, but as far as I can see it will not be possible, since I proceed hence to Italy about the 13th of September, unless something new turns up in the meantime. Again and again farewell. Basle, August, 1514.[4]

Later on he had the opportunity of meeting and speaking with Reuchlin, and of this interview we shall give an account in its place. His passage through the towns of Germany was almost in the nature of an ovation, so much honor was shown him. After he had visited Strassburg the following letter was sent after him by Jacob Wimpfeling, in the name of the Strassburg Literary Society:

Sometimes the bundles and packages are piled on to a more than usually stupid beast of burden, and so the Literary Society of Strassburg have placed on me, a worn-out veteran, the task of sending to you in the name of everyone our kind regards and our good wishes for your health, and to ask that you will write to us soon that we may know how you are. We are led to believe that you have been kindly received by the University of Basle, and that you are being honored there as the most learned among the learned. We hope especially that in such a philosophic company Beatus Rhenanus, who loves, honors, and respects you on his own account, will deny you nothing which can add to your happiness. Our entire Literary Society commends itself to you, and offers itself most ready at your service. Sebastian Brant, Jacob Sturm, Thomas Rapp, Thomas Vogler, Mathias Schürer, John of Rudolfingen, Stephen Tieler, Peter Heldung, John Guida, Jerome Gebuler, John Ruser, Othmar, and all the others whose names would take too long to mention here, also wish to be remembered to you, and this list includes myself particularly. Farewell. Strassburg, September 1, 1514.[5]

Ulric Zasius, a Councilor of the Empire and a distinguished professor of jurisprudence, wrote to him in this manner:

Humbly commends himself. Some time ago I would have seemed to myself bold indeed to have written these few lines to you, great Roterodamus, for the exceeding majesty of your divine erudition was so present to my vision that I did not dare to do so. For since I am not initiated into any accuracy of learning, why should I pollute your more hallowed shrine by any rashness of mine? But, made more confident by the persuasion of that noble young man Boniface, who never ceases to praise your kindness, I have dedicated to you these rustic trifles of mine, praying only, not that you will add

[4] Eras. Ep. 300.

[5] *Ibid.*, 302.

me to your list of clients, for I am unworthy of that honor, but that you will include me in the list of your menial servants. For I will be to you footman and doorkeeper, ready to sweep your floors, attend to your fish-pools, and work in your gardens; in fact, there is nothing I will refuse to do, even to obtaining your permission to scrub your doorstep. Farewell, glory of our world, splendor of, I will not say, Germany, but all living men. Along the lines of Civil Law, of which I am a professor, I am meditating a few purple patches in my *True Perceptions,*[6] against the common sensations of others, in which work you are praised by me as God is by mortals. Again farewell. Freiburg, September 7, 1514.[7]

This gives us an idea of the fulsome reception he met with everywhere; and now at length we can imagine him rising to his full height and looking all men straight in the eye, feeling himself at last the compeer of any and all the literary lights of his age. Not only this, but from this time on we observe that he assumes the right to give his opinion on all the questions of the day, be they literary or theological, and that he takes it for granted that his advice and suggestions will be acceptable even to Popes and kings. Towards others of lower degree, who, however, must bear the stamp of learning to merit his attention at all, he exhibits the friendly and paternal attitude of one who is aware of his own great worth, and who is certain that his words will be listened to with the deepest gratitude. Thus we see that in the Reuchlin affair he counseled that harassed and much tried man to be moderate in his language, and not to treat his adversaries with too much contempt, and especially not to attack the entire Dominican Order on account of the injustice of a few of its members. In like manner he suggested to the inquisitor Hoogstraaten that his duty as a Christian, a theologian, and a Dominican, necessitated courtesy and kindness towards Reuchlin; and that by treating him thus, he would impress the world with the fact that he was pursuing him only out of zeal for the Christian faith, and not out of any personal motives. But Hoogstraaten had as many of the defects of human nature as his contemporaries, and was not to be stayed in salving his wounded pride, thus giving the opportunity to the authors of the *Letters of Obscure Men* to publish his epitaph, though he was not yet dead by any means:

So here lies Hoogstraat dead as a stone;
The bad he made glad, but the good to groan;
And when he found he could live no longer,
His wish to harm waxed all the stronger.

This was perhaps not quite just to Hoogstraaten, for Reuchlin, scholar as he was, had been at times indiscreet with his pen, and had given offense to monks in general, with unnecessary disparagement of their calling, as they thought. The occasion of this was a comedy that he had formerly written entitled *Henno,* in which he had covered some Dominican friars with ridicule, a proceeding very difficult for any but the most saintly to endure. His friend the Bishop of Worms, on

[6] The title of one of his books. [7] Eras. Ep. 303.

reading it, counseled him to suppress it at once, which counsel he proceeded to follow; but unfortunately for himself another copy with which he had parted came into circulation, with the result that it was printed without his knowledge, and so the damage was done. We may easily read between the lines of this whole controversy that the personal factor had more to do with the persecution of Reuchlin than any theological errors; but for the seven years between 1509 and 1516 he was in constant dread of what the vindictiveness of his enemies might contrive for him. Hutten, who is not very reliable in some matters, afterwards accused Erasmus of acting unjustly towards Reuchlin, going so far as to say that Erasmus was jealous of Reuchlin's fame. This is distinctly not so. We have a feeling that Erasmus was more than pleased to help Reuchlin in bringing about the discomfiture and defeat of Hoogstraaten and his allies, for the reason that they were monks. *Voilà l'ennemi.* In any case we have two letters written by Erasmus, one to the Cardinal of St. George, and the other to Cardinal Grimani, both of which show Hutten's accusation to be groundless, and prove on the contrary his staunch fidelity to his friend. To Cardinal Riario (St. George) he writes:

> I beg and beseech you in the most earnest manner, through the regard which your Eminence has always manifested towards good literature, that John Reuchlin, that illustrious man, may know and feel that you are well and kindly disposed towards him in his cause. For therein you will merit well of literature and literati everywhere, who the more learned they are the more earnestly they rally to him. All Germany is indebted to this man for first exciting within her borders a love of Greek and Latin learning; for he is a man of distinguished abilities in many languages, skilled in many sciences, famous and renowned in the Christian world for the books he has already published, especially in favor with the Emperor Maximilian, who has appointed him of his Council, respected and honored by his townsmen, for whom he performs the office of Duumvir, a man of always heretofore unsullied fame, and revered in addition for his venerable grey hairs. . . . The memory of Julius II is more pleasing to many here on account of his freeing by his single word from similar tribulations Jacob Wimpfeling, a man beyond all commendation of erudition and saintly life, now old and venerable; and also imposing silence on his calumniators. Believe me, that whoever will restore John Reuchlin to literature and the Muses will win the gratitude of innumerable people. I pray for long life to your Eminence, to whom I dedicate and consecrate whatever I have and am.[8]

This was written to the Cardinal while the case was pending at Rome in 1515, and shortly before the Pope had decided in Reuchlin's favor. Similarly he wrote to Cardinal Grimani, saying among other things:

> We have seen this recently, not without great distress of mind,

[8] *Ibid.*, 333, ll. 105 *sqq.*

in the case of that sterling character John Reuchlin. Long since was it just and proper that this man should enjoy the pursuits of his venerable old age, and that he should reap a most pleasing harvest from the sowing of his early years. Most fit was it that this man, versed in so many languages and sciences, in the autumn of his life should pour out the rich treasures of his genius over the universal world. To this he should have been stimulated by praise, invited by reward, incited by esteem. But some persons, I know not whom, have arisen, and when they could not achieve for themselves anything of value, they strive for glory in a most perverse fashion. Immortal God! what tragedies they have brought to pass, and from what frivolous trifles! That a little pamphlet, nay a letter, and that written in German, could have excited such a tumult, when he had not published it, nor dreamed of doing so! Who would ever have known such a pamphlet was written, had not these very men themselves published it? How much more kindly it would have been, if there did happen to be any error therein, since all men may err, to suppress it, or to interpret it broadly, or in fact to pardon it to a man of such marvelous qualities! And I do not say this because I see any error in it, for it is the duty of others to decide on that. . . . Now this man, worthy as he is of every kind of reward, is involved in the most wretched sort of litigation, to the great sorrow and anger of all learned men, nay, let me add, of all Germany. Yet they still entertain the hope that, by your help, this illustrious man may be restored to the world and to literature.[9]

And in his letter to Leo X, written almost on the same day, he alludes to Reuchlin as follows:

For on the other remains of Jerome which I have not myself undertaken (even if occasionally I help out not a little) many most erudite men have now long labored. Among whom is that most outstanding man, John Reuchlin of Pforzheim, in the three languages, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, almost equally skilled; in addition, so versed in every kind of learning that he can vie with the greatest. Whence deservedly Germany regards and venerates him as if a phoenix and as her unique glory.[10]

Hence we see that Hutten was wrong in his accusation against Erasmus. Although Reuchlin and Erasmus exchanged several letters, these two men of similar tastes and like experiences never met but once, and that was in Frankfort some time later. But Erasmus certainly had the satisfaction of knowing that his appeals to his Roman friends in Reuchlin's behalf had not been made in vain; and the incident may also serve to show us that justice might triumph even when pitted against the Inquisition. Erasmus treasured the memory of his friend all his life; and we are not surprised to see that he embalmed his sentiments towards him in one of his famous colloquies, of which we shall in due time treat.

[9] *Ibid.*, 334, ll. 178 *sqq.*

[10] *Ibid.*, 335, ll. 300 *sqq.*

We have noted the reception that he met with on his way to Basle, so that it will be in order now to tell of his experiences on entering that ancient city. John Witz, or as he called himself Sapidus, accompanied him from Schletstadt to Basle, in the way of guide and friend. This was a young man of good family and of learning and prominence, who smoothed the path of Erasmus by his large acquaintance with the literary circles of Basle. But the experiences which Erasmus had already met with in Strassburg and Schletstadt had warned him that he could do very little in a literary way if he kept up this continual round of festivities; so he took Sapidus aside and asked him not to ruin him with all this hospitality, that he enjoyed only really the company of a few choice and select friends, and then enlarged on his object in coming to Basle. Sapidus saw the cogency of this reasoning, and assisted him to the best of his ability and in accordance with Erasmus' expressed wishes. One of the first to greet him at Basle was Beat Bild of Schletstadt, or, as he had Latinized his uncouth name, Beatus Rhenanus, from whose writings we have received more knowledge of Erasmus than from any other single source. As we shall have constant occasion to speak of him, we need say no more about him here than that he was a young man of thirty years, and that after leaving his native town of Schletstadt he went to the University of Paris, where he won his degree of Master in 1505. His first work after leaving the University was with the press of Henry Stephanus, the Paris printer, after which he became connected with that of Mathias Schürer of Strassburg. Thence he went to Basle to share with the learned monk Kuno of Nuremburg the work of correcting for the press of Amerbach. He was another Batt, and willingly effaced himself that Erasmus might profit by his care and supervision of the greater man's writings. Although he was a fertile writer himself, his instinct was true; for, like Batt, his connection with Erasmus more than his own writings has earned for him the remembrance and gratitude of the learned world.

In Basle, also, Erasmus met a fellow-countryman of his named Lystrius, a physician well skilled in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, who in the event became greatly attached to him. He had long been an admirer of Erasmus, and in 1513 had edited a new edition of the *Praise of Folly,* with notes and explanations, which later gave Erasmus occasion to say that this work had been understood only by a few until Lystrius had added his commentary.[11] Here, too, Erasmus met for the first time the Amerbachs, the father and three sons, whose friendship he was to enjoy for the rest of his days. He tells about meeting Froben, Amerbach's partner, to whom he handed some letters which he said he had received from Erasmus, adding that between himself and that personage there existed the closest intimacy; that the latter had commissioned him to see about having some of his writings printed by them, and that whatever he did Froben might consider as being ratified by Erasmus; and that, finally, he was so like Erasmus, that anyone looking at him beheld Erasmus. The worthy printer scratched

[11] *Ibid.,* 641.

his head at this, but discerning a twinkle in his visitor's eye, he laughed heartily at the imposition which had been practised on him. The upshot of it all was that Amerbach, the father-in-law of Froben, like Andreas d'Asola, the father-in-law of Aldus at Venice, paid his bill at the inn, and insisted that he should enter his home bag and baggage and there live as his guest. The University of Basle, through its Dean, Maurice Finger, invited him to dine with the faculty, where he met the other men of that day and place. Among these was the Rector, Louis Ber, a laureated graduate of the University of Paris, a man still young, but of such learning, such chastity of life, and such prudence, that Erasmus declared in one of his letters his belief that Ber would bring great honor to Germany. In Basle, also, he met his old physician, William Cop, to whom we may be sure he related with much circumstance the story of his lumbago, and from whom he sought a remedy against another attack. Zwingli and Glareanus met him here also, but since we shall have to mention their relations with him more at length later on we shall not enlarge on the matter at present.

It was just at this triumphant moment in his career, when he was being dined and fêted, when he was being honored by universities and their faculties, when he was drinking in the adulation of the literary world, that Martin Dorp sent him the letter to which we adverted some time ago, imploring him to undo in some way and in some measure the harm that his *Praise of Folly* was inflicting on religion. Dorp, as we have said, was a young and talented man of thirty who had just taken his Doctor's degree and who had been elected to a professorship at the University of Louvain. From these circumstances we might assume that he was filled with the idealism of youth, and actuated by a zealous desire to do good. He had the traditional regard and veneration for the Church, and was as yet uncontaminated with worldliness. Unlike Erasmus, he had not yet realized how much the personal factor entered into the matter of Church government, and even into the formulating of Church policies, not in questions dealing with faith or dogma, but in questions dealing solely with her relations to her own temporal power and that of other nations. Unlike Erasmus, too, he had not visited a Rome which was still reminiscent of Alexander VI, and as a consequence, had preserved the candor of his soul fresh and unsullied. He may have had a larger soul than Erasmus, and may have understood instinctively that the Church consisted of the divine and the human, the divine unchanging, immutable, eternal, while the human side was the opposite of all these attributes, hence prone to weakness, and even sin. Unlike Erasmus, he may have realized that his duty was not to rail at these sinners, nor to revile their folly, but rather to neutralize their bad example with good, to preserve them, as much as in him lay, from the effects of their own misdeeds, but above all to keep the flocks entrusted to them from being scandalized and robbed of their eternal hopes and aspirations. This we conceive to have been Dorp's motive in writing as he did to Erasmus; but it was wasted effort, especially at this juncture in the latter's affairs. He failed Dorp as he failed many others; as he failed, for instance, Leo X when the

latter asked him to reply to Luther; as he failed Luther when the latter asked him to join forces with him in the work of the Reformation; as he failed Hutten when that erratic genius requested him to assist him with his pen in disarming the adversaries of Luther and Melanchthon; as he failed the Elector Frederick when that puzzled monarch asked him his opinion of Luther, for instead of clarifying the situation in a sensible and truthful manner, he replied with a witticism which was only partly true, and for that reason, all the more dangerous. He had constituted himself the arch-critic of the human part of the Church in his *Praise of Folly,* but, unfortunately, his methods were destructive rather than corrective. Nowadays no one censures Sebastian Brant for his *Ship of Fools,* for his satire was not corrosive nor subversive of the morality he wished to restore; but Erasmus' satire was vindictive and derogatory, not only to the human aspect of the Christian religion, but also to its divine part. Hence our sympathies in this affair are with Dorp. For it was from the fear of Erasmus' destructive criticism that Dorp besought him to hesitate before upsetting the accepted version of the Scriptures as they were presented by the Church in the Latin Vulgate. And in view of the circumstances we cannot bring ourselves to censure Dorp very much, for he brings some very good arguments to bear, and his anticipations of harm to the Sacred Text might be justifiable in the event that Erasmus should decide to be iconoclastic. We know from a perusal of Erasmus' edition of the New Testament that Dorp's fears proved groundless, but how was Dorp to know that before the event? So he writes:

> I hear that you have cleansed the *Epistles of St. Jerome* from the errors with which they abounded hitherto, that you have marked the spurious passages with *obeli,* and that you have elucidated the obscure parts; and in this you have certainly done something worthy of yourself, and for which you will merit the praise of theologians, especially of those who desire to see polish and elegance in connection with sacred literature. But I also understand that you have corrected the New Testament, and have annotated more than a thousand passages with much profit to divines. Here again there is something that in the most friendly way possible I should bring to your attention. Now I pass over the fact that Laurentius Valla and James Faber have both toiled in the same field, and I am not flattering you when I say that you will show your abilities to be superior to theirs in every way. But we must examine what manner of task it is to correct the Sacred Scriptures, and to amend the Latin codices by reference to the Greek. For if I shall show our Latin translation to contain nothing false or erroneous, will you not admit that the work of all who try to amend it is superfluous except for the purpose of pointing out where in any place the translator might have been able to make the sense more significant? But now I am arguing about the truth and integrity of Scripture, and I assert these to be inherent in our Latin Vulgate edition. For we are not of the belief that the Universal Church for so many

centuries has been wrong in always using and still continuing to use this edition which she stamps with her approval. Neither is it likely that so many of the holy fathers, so many of the most learned men, were in error when, relying on it, they defined many most difficult questions in the general councils, defended and elucidated their faith, and then published the decrees to which even kings themselves lowered their emblems of authority. . . . Therefore we must admit either that the fathers have acted rashly, and must continue to do so if they follow this translation and interpretation, or that it is true and sound. Why? Do you deem the Greek codices to be more correct than the Latin? How could they have displayed a greater zeal for preserving the sacred books than the Latins, when the Christian religion often decayed amongst them, and when, with the exception of the Gospel of St. John alone, they affirm all the others to contain some error, not to mention anything else; while amongst the Latins the Church, that Spouse of Christ, has ever continued inviolate? Moreover, how shall you know that you have obtained correct codices, no matter how many copies you may obtain, even if I grant that the Greeks may have some perfect examples? . . .

All these reasons have induced me, dear Erasmus, to beg and beseech you, through our mutual friendship which you cherish though far away, and by your native kindness and generosity, to emend only those passages of the New Testament where, without destroying the meaning, you may be able to make the passage more significant; or if in your annotations you deem that the meaning should be changed entirely, you will give your reasons for it in the preface.[12]

To this most modest and most friendly request Erasmus answered in a voluminous epistle, sweeping away Dorp's timid rill of appeal in a veritable torrent of eloquent and victorious reply, where metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, and hyperbole vied with each other in hurrying the daring objector to the ocean of utter annihilation. Not quite that, however, for he retained Dorp's affection in despite of all. We do not anywhere read that he was convinced by the arguments of Erasmus; but as he was a younger man he was naturally flattered by the attention and courtesy of the elder writer, and may have concluded that the latter's vaster mind grasped visions not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals like himself. And Erasmus appreciated the younger divine's affection for him, and at his death, which occurred in 1525, composed an epitaph on him which is full of feeling.[13]

[12] *Ibid.*, 304, ll. 81 *sqq.*

[13] Dorp's fear seems to have been that the example of Erasmus in meddling with the accepted translation of the Bible might be followed by others to the complete undermining of all authoritative interpretation. In this he was not mistaken, for he lived to see a Greek Bible published at Strassburg by Cephaleus in 1524, in which the celebrated passage John i. 7 is altogether omitted, as is also Mark xi. 26. Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce Books*, Vol. I, p. 103, may be consulted on this point. The rashness of this biblical innovator was never approved, for we find these passages in all editions of the Bible, whether Protestant or Catholic, ever since.

But to return to Basle, where Erasmus was now staying. He valued so much the expression of personal regard sent him from the Literary Society of Strassburg by the medium of Wimpfeling that he replied to it in a lengthy epistle, wherein he mentioned each one of the subscribers by name, adding thereto whatever of compliment he could recall as apt and fitting to each. The fame of his masterpiece the *Adages* had preceded him, and he was not the man to hide his light under a bushel; so we perceive allusions in every letter of this period to what he considered a work equally as great, namely, his *New Testament,* as presently forthcoming. So, too, he makes frequent mention of an edition of the works of St. Jerome which he is preparing; and it is for this latter work that he has especially made this journey to Basle. It seems he had heard that John Amerbach, a printer of this town, was planning an edition of the same work under the editorship of Gregory Reisch, a Carthusian monk, who later became prior of his monastery, Mount of St. John Baptist, near Freiburg, and who had already done an immense amount of work on the subject. So, as soon as he had ascertained from Amerbach how matters stood, he addressed himself to Reisch for coöperation and assistance in the following letter:

> Reverend Father. Please accept my best wishes. I have been laboring, and am still laboring most ardently, to put into the hands of men the corrected epistles of St. Jerome, than which nothing can be named or imagined more corrupt, although, in my opinion, Jerome seems almost the only father worthy of being read by everyone, at least among Latin theologians. This is the plan I have followed. First, I shall set down what is clearly his; secondly, what is falsely attributed to Jerome, but still is worthy of being read; thirdly, I shall also bring forward the spurious passages inserted by I know not what witless and impertinent knave. I will add the reasons why such passages do not seem to belong to Jerome. So the reader may not be deceived by any lying titles, neither shall he miss anything from the work if that sort of silly stuff please him. . . .
>
> I see that you regard this divine man from the same angle that I do, and I find no fault with your plan, although I could not follow it without great labor to myself, since all my work would have to be done over afresh. . . .
>
> In the epistle to Heliodorus which begins with *Quanto amore,* there are various readings of *cui nos morituros relinquis;* tell me, if not too much trouble, what is your opinion in the matter. In the epistle to Rusticus which begins *Nihil Christiano, etc.,* I am puzzled by that passage concerning the sons of Jonadab, about whom he says mention was made in the Psalm as being the first to suffer captivity. I read about them in Jeremias, but I do not remember that anything was said of them by the Psalmist. In the epistle to Nepotianus, which begins *Petis a me,* I am puzzled by the passage *Testitudineo Grunnius incedebat gradu,* especially in

the few verses where *Hic bene nummatus, etc.*, occur. In the epistle to Letha we meet the passage *Quibus corax, niphus, miles.* I have guessed the meaning of many of these, but I cannot do so for all of them. Again, in the same passage, *Cibus eius olusculum sit et simila, caroque et pisciculi,* I divine the reading ought to be *Cibus eius olusculum ⟨sit⟩ et e simila caroque pisciculi.*

And there are others, for what is there in it which is not corrupt? But I have not time to write about each one separately. Farewell, dearest father. Your friend always, Erasmus. Basle, September, 1514.[14]

Reisch had here an excellent opportunity to retort on Erasmus that a mere ignorant and stupid monk could not be expected to unravel the problems that had here puzzled the greater mind of his correspondent; but he was probably, like the majority of his cloth, of a forgiving nature, and chose to disregard such eccentricities of Erasmus as his monachomania, in view of his marvelous capacity for good when so disposed. So he answered his letter in the gentlest way possible:

Kindest and most learned Erasmus. I rejoice exceedingly that it is now well known you are going to add the weight of your authority to my efforts in issuing St. Jerome; and I believe it has been divinely brought to pass that the results of my labor up to the present should not appear before the public until your more practised mind, with its correcting file, should restore and illustrate those passages which would doubtless always remain either maimed, mutilated, or obscured by errors. I am especially pleased that what has been falsely attributed to Jerome, as well as what is spuriously inserted, will be segregated from what is undoubtedly his. If you should change my plan, or rather the plan of the senior Amerbach now defunct and with the blessed, you will cause in the judgment of many a considerable loss to the booksellers, and perhaps no less to the readers; for the epistles, as you see, are very confusedly arranged with the books and treatises of other men which are about to be printed. . . . Hence, if possible, allow the order of the parts to remain as I have placed them, with this exception, that the epistles which his books and treatises call for be placed first, and then let those follow which are falsely attributed to him. The ancient synopses were never very satisfactory; you will do an exceedingly good service to add others, and likewise *scholia.* I have none of the more correct codices by me, and I have made no annotations, with the exception of the Hebrew phrases which are in the copies. We have perfected special passages in certain epistles, but on account of the death of the printer I have not been able to see them. I am diffident of being able to ascertain what you, of all men the most learned and accomplished, are unable to decipher. I trust your reverence is enjoying the best of health. In haste, from the Carthusian monastery of Freiburg, October 4, 1514.[15]

[14] Eras. Ep. 308.

[15] *Ibid.*, 309.

So we see by these two letters that the fame of Erasmus had spread far and wide, and that the dreams of his youth wherein he saw himself acclaimed a genius had at last been realized. This must have been most gratifying to a man to whom the praise of others was as the breath in his nostrils; and we can have nothing but admiration for the courage and industry which had led to the accomplishment of what he had thus far done. And now that we have thus expressed for once and all our admiration, let it not be deemed invidious on our part if occasionally we point out his defects, for only thus can we arrive at any true estimate of his character and his motives, which, after all, are the only objects that we have set ourselves to ascertain. Allen has pointed out that, in the above-quoted letter to Reisch, Erasmus has given a wrong reference to Nepotianus. This means that his memory, overlaid with such a vast store of curious erudition, did not function so readily as it once had. We must remember that he was now nearly fifty years old, and may henceforth be expected, in the natural order of things, to show some of the deterioration due to age. But, for all that, his memory was still marvelous and served him well for a long time to come.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE "HIERONYMI OPERA OMNIA": CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE POPE

One of the reasons why Erasmus dreaded a return to Steyn was that he had a restless spirit. He was a bird of passage and could not, even if he would, stay long in one place. When in England he longed for Germany, and when in Germany his aspirations were for Rome. The search after codices of the various authors partly, and partly the search after possible gifts to support him in his literary labors, were responsible for this in great measure; and yet, withal, it was the inheritance of the neurasthenic, the inability to be perfectly content anywhere, that kept him wandering all his life from country to country, welcome everywhere but happy nowhere. He had no sooner reached Basle than he began to write back to England, to see if by chance his absence had made his patrons there long for his return, which brings back forcibly to us his advice to Ammonius on that subject.[1] Among others he wrote to Colet in this strain; and though we have not the letter itself, we have Colet's reply, which we will give here:

> Dear Erasmus. I received your letter written from Basle, August 30, 1514. I am rejoiced that we know where you are, and under what sky you live, and I am also rejoiced to know that you are well. See to it that you perform your vow to St. Paul that you told me about. That they have made so much of you at Mainz, as you write, I can easily believe. I am glad that you will come back to us sometime; yet I cannot bring myself to expect it. Concerning the matter of a better recompense for you I know not what to say, except that those who have the means are unwilling, and those who are willing have not the means. All your friends here are well; Canterbury [Archbishop Warham] shows his accustomed suavity, Lincoln [Wolsey], now rules at York, London [Fitzjames] continues to harass me.[2] Daily I meditate on my retreat and retirement with the Carthusians. My nest there is almost finished. When you return to us you will find me there, dead to the world, as far as I can see. Take care of your health, and let us know whither you betake yourself. London, October 20, 1514.[3]

It is evident that Colet believed in the power of the saints to intercede and obtain favors for the living, as is shown by his reminding

[1] See page 336.

[2] Wolsey, who was already Bishop of Lincoln, had just been appointed to the archbishopric of York. Fitzjames was Bishop of London, and had already accused Colet of heretical tendencies.

[3] Eras. Ep. 314.

Erasmus not to forget the vow to St. Paul which he made when he was suffering the agonies of lumbago. It is also evident that the monks of Shene, with whom Colet designed to pass the rest of his life, were not of the Erasmian kind. Lupton, in his *Life of Colet*, quotes from a little manuscript volume which once belonged to Shene and is now among the Lansdowne MSS. in the British Museum, the following instructions for novices:

> For your body you are to weare a shirte of heare, and a cord aboute your loynes, and a wolen shirte. You are to lye upon strawe or a bed of chaff, with a blanket betweene. For your diet, it is a perpetuall abstinence from flesh, in so much that in the greatest or most daingerous sicknes you can expect no dispensation therein. Also a goode parte of the yeare wee abstaine from all whitmeates, as in Advent, Lent, and all the Fridays of the yeare. . . . For silence and solitude, it ought to be perpetuall, except when our statutes giveth licence, or that you aske leave.[4]

Then follows an enumeration of certain services to train and discipline the novice

> . . . in the purgative way; menial tasks of sweeping, and the like; which workes, by howe much they are more vile and contemptible in the eyes of the world, by soe much they are more pretious and meritorious in the sight of Almighty God.

This marks another difference between Colet and Erasmus, the one believing that the mortification of the body was meritorious in the eyes of God, the other calling it mere formalism and Judaic superstition. The monastic life was a harsh life, as we are aware, but it had no terrors for Colet, who was ascetic by nature, had no objections to a diet of fish, and could see a reason for fasting that evidently was not vouchsafed to Erasmus. But this is not the place to contrast the two men, whose differences were as striking as they were numerous.

Many of the letters which Erasmus has preserved for us are letters addressed to him by the greatest scholars of Germany, such as Henry Bebel, professor of Poetry and Rhetoric at the University of Tübingen, and author of a work on adages; Willibald Pirckheimer, who, after a thorough education in the schools of Germany and Italy, settled down in Nuremburg, of which town he soon became councilor, and was afterwards made a Councilor of the Empire by Maximilian, who valued his scholarship so greatly that he often consulted him on matters purely literary; John Witz, or Sapidus, who took his degree at the University of Paris in 1506; and many others. But the learned men whom he met personally, and who had exerted all their powers of persuasion on mutual friends to bring about an introduction to the great man, are too numerous to mention here, and we shall meet most of them again. One instance alone may be given here of the wonderful desire that he inspired in these men to see and know him. Pirckheimer is earnestly begging Beatus Rhenanus, who has already met

[4] P. 217.

Erasmus, to help him to the acquaintance of the famous scholar, saying:

> Although I have merited the notice of the Emperor, have acquired the favor of various kings, have obtained the friendship of learned and distinguished men, and seem to be well esteemed by the rest of my friends, yet I would not consider the friendship of so illustrious and erudite a man among the least of my fortunate possessions, but would value it far more highly than my most precious belongings. Strive, therefore, I beg of you, that I may be enabled to acquire his friendship, for you can do nothing else for me that would be so gratifying. You promised in your letter that you would visit me here sometime; and oh! if you were to bring with you such a guest, with what good will and affection would I greet him! I hope, and my mind assures me, that I shall not die without seeing him, and that it will be given to me to speak with him face to face.[5]

So closed 1514, and the new year found him working hard on his *St. Jerome* and his *New Testament,* comparing copies, examining ancient codices, and occasionally calling on those of his acquaintances who were skilled in Hebrew to throw light on obscure passages. His time was so absorbed in these occupations that he could not see half the people who desired to meet him; but, if they were noted for scholarship, or influential by virtue of wealth or position, he would write them a letter varying in length in direct ratio to their importance. Beatus Rhenanus fully obeyed Pirckheimer's injunction to make him acquainted with Erasmus by sending the latter the epistle quoted above. The sentiment of this so pleased Erasmus that he interrupted his pressing work to send Pirckheimer a letter couched in those flattering phrases in whose use he was a past master, telling him that Rhenanus had spoken so much about him that he was already inflamed with affection for him, and that, even before that time, he had read his works, adding that the splendor of his learning had adorned his wealth, and the splendor of his wealth had added lustre to his learning. He went on to say that the desire of such a man to obtain the friendship of him, Erasmus, who amounted to so little, was surprising, since this friendship was something which he himself had long desired but never dared expect. Then he tells him that, as a messenger was just leaving, he was sending him a few literary trifles, since he preferred to accompany his letter to him with even such trash as these rather than with nothing at all. He was living in hopes, he said, of having plenty of leisure soon, when he would write him not letters but volumes. He closes his letter by telling him that he is returning to England in March, from which statement we may conclude that something had happened to change his decision with regard to visiting Rome at this time.

His work on St. Jerome was already coming off the press, and the manuscript of the *New Testament* was ready for the printers. He was torn between his desire of seeing this latter work through the press and

[5] Eras. Ep. 318.

his longing to return to England; but, since he had decided that this work on the Scriptures should be his masterpiece, he not only sacrificed to it his projected journey to Rome, but also deferred his return to England for the same compelling reason. But at length he set out on the return journey, after having spent almost eight months at Basle, during which period he had performed the Herculean task of copying, castigating, revising, and reading the final proof of his various works which were then printing, or to be printed after his departure. One of these which we have not previously mentioned was an edition of Seneca's *Lucubrationes omnes,* for which he had prepared the corrected and annotated text while in England. This he dedicated to Thomas Ruthall, Bishop of Durham, one of the three English bishops from whom he expected and probably received great assistance. After writing the preface and dedication as above, he left it in the hands of the printers, and began his journey across the Channel. The book was slow in being issued; and it was not until August that it was finished, and Ruthall did not see a copy of it until the following year, much to the chagrin of Erasmus.

Erasmus left Basle sometime in the second week of March, 1515, and visited Frankfort in company with a party of Swiss and German booksellers. This was no bad stroke of business policy in itself, for the great book fair at Frankfort was the efficient means of dispensing editions of one's works at a profit. Here, too, he met Hutten again, as he had previously met him at Mainz; but evidently they had not arrived at any such degree of intimacy as obtained between them in later years. From there he went to Antwerp, where he probably stayed with his friend Peter Gilles; thence to Ghent, where he was delayed by John Le Sauvage, the imperial Chancellor, who had just begun to help him with money and influence; thence to St. Omer, where he called on the Abbot again. After this we lose sight of him, but assume that he crossed the Channel by way of Calais and Dover, arriving in London about the last week in April. Probably the last work which he touched before leaving the continent was his *Enarratio allegorica in primum psalmum,* which he left behind him at Louvain to be printed by Martens, who issued it in October, 1515. This he dedicated to his friend Beatus Rhenanus; and as this psalm begins with the words *Beatus vir qui non ambulauit,* etc., Erasmus rang the changes on the *Beatus* in a hundred different ways in this dedication, finally winding up by sending his *Beatus* to his Beatus as the only present that he deemed at all consonant with his friend's character. From all that the after days tell us it would seem that he had entrusted the care of seeing his *St. Jerome* through the press to Beatus Rhenanus; and to no one else could he better have assigned this task than to this ardent admirer, both on the ground of scholarship and on the ground of his being willing to do this sort of drudgery for the great Erasmus. This connection, based on a mutual esteem of each for the other, lasted for the rest of Erasmus' life; and in Beatus, as a consequence, we have his first and most reliable biographer, making due allowance for certain instances wherein the younger man's admiration may have biased his judgment in a few minor details of his famous friend's life and activities.

And, speaking of Rhenanus, we take this occasion to refer to something in Nichols's translation of Erasmus' letters which we feel ought not to be passed over in silence. In writing to Erasmus at about this period, Rhenanus says:

> Your kinsman here has received two gold pieces from Froben, and he was all the more welcome to us, because he resembled Erasmus so much in his features that, even if he had not told us in so many words, the similarity of his person would have immediately declared him to be your relative.[6]

Out of this remark of Rhenanus to Erasmus we find Nichols drawing an undoubtedly wrong conclusion. He says:

> This epistle contains a passage that has not, so far as I know, attracted special attention, but is calculated to excite some curiosity, as touching on the private life of Erasmus. The bearer who had lately arrived at Basle bore a great resemblance to Erasmus, and was apparently in some way nearly related to him, how near is left to the reader's suspicion.[7]

This inference of Nichols is unfortunate as insinuating that this was an illegitimate son of Erasmus, and unjust as it is based on no evidence. Besides, it is unnecessary in explaining Rhenanus' remark. We need only to remember that Erasmus' brother Peter was still living and, hearing that he was in Basle, might have been in a position to make a call on him; but it is far more probable that it was some cousin, of whom he must have had a great many considering that his father was one of ten brothers, and this does not include possible cousins on his mother's side. Were Nichols's insinuation correct, it would have been in utterly bad taste for Rhenanus to have referred to the matter at all. But what tells most strongly against such a possibility is that, though Erasmus' enemies accused him of a great many things in the period we are now approaching, there never was the slightest allusion to any such disgraceful circumstance as this. So we feel that we are only doing Erasmus justice when we say that Nichols was entirely wrong, not only as to the fact, but also as to his exercise of judgment in sending forth such an ungrounded suspicion.

Every time that Erasmus had crossed the Channel hitherto something unpleasant had happened, and this time was no exception, for he lost his baggage. This was a serious loss indeed, as we learn from his letter to Peter Gilles:

> My baggage, which I had entrusted to the brother of Francis,[8] has not arrived, and to me nothing could be more unfortunate, for in it are all my commentaries on Jerome; and if I do not receive it soon they will have to stop work at Basle on what they are now printing, which will be disastrous. If this has happened by chance, it has happened most unfortunately; but if it has been

[6] *Ibid.*, 330.
[7] *Epistles of Erasmus*, Vol. II, p. 204.
[8] Francis Birckman, an Antwerp bookseller.

done for a set purpose that they may get rid of their remaining copies of the *Adages,* then it was done most maliciously, for there is no point on which he could do me more harm. I was about to present their books to the bishops; now I salute them empty-handed, and will likewise be dismissed by them empty-handed.[9]

From which we may infer that he had brought with him for distribution among his English friends copies of his new edition of the *Adages,* which had just been issued by Froben, and for which Erasmus had written a new preface and somewhat revised the text. The commentaries that he mentions as having gone astray with the baggage were undoubtedly manuscript notes on his *St. Jerome.* We see here a good example of his suspicious nature. He finds delayed the baggage which he had confided to the care of a bookseller's brother whom he had met at the Frankfort book fair, and rushes to the conclusion that this bookseller must have on his hands some unsold copies of the older edition of the *Adages* which he would like to dispose of before the English public should see the newer edition of which there were copies in Erasmus' baggage. Since we see no more about the mater in his letters, and since he continued to be very friendly with the bookseller, we are permitted to assume that the baggage turned up in due time.

Having no doubt informed some of his Roman friends that he intended visiting Rome after leaving Basle, and having failed to do so, he felt it incumbent on him to allege some reason for his action. He was meditating a stroke of policy that might have far-reaching results to himself personally. Hitherto he had been satisfied to dedicate his works to princes, bishops, and rich patrons for a monetary consideration; now he was going to give to the world his masterpieces, the *Epistles of St. Jerome,* and the *New Testament* in Greek, with his own Latin translation, and accompanied with his own annotations. Now at last was his ambition vaulting upward as he decided to cast aside the mercenary fetters that had up to the present held it down. Like Horace he had long been looking for the time when he could say:

Sublimi feriam sidera vertice.

Here was the opportunity. He decided that he would dedicate these great works to Leo X, the head of the Universal Church. Knowing Erasmus as we now do, we may at least admit the possibility of a well-calculated plan to avert possible consequences from his own head by thus making the Pope sponsor for these works. He had already succeeded once thus when he made Thomas More father the *Praise of Folly,* a very doubtful honor indeed, for the loyal Englishman was already involved in bitter controversy on its account. Erasmus was very well aware of the dubious reception which his own personal annotations on these works might receive at the hands of theologians everywhere, a state of things the possibility of which had been well presaged by Dorp in the letter we have already quoted.[10] His personal acquaintance with Leo was of the slightest, and he had yet to devise ways and

[9] Eras. Ep. 332.

[10] See pages 317 *sqq.*

means of accomplishing his desire. Deeming that the constantly changing strata of Roman ecclesiastical circles might have buried his memory completely, he thought it advisable to bring himself freshly to their remembrance by writing them some of his characteristic letters, in which he did not attempt to veil the flattery nor disguise the adulation, stating only that he would not flatter them for worlds. It is strange that such fulsomeness was not disagreeable to men who were otherwise mentally acute and thoroughly adept in the little machinations by which the humble climb to greatness, but such is the fact. We are as often moved by our defects as by our virtues; and Shakespeare grasped this great thought when he put into the mouth of Decius Brutus those lines about Caesar:

> But when I tell him he hates flatterers,
> He says he does, being then most flattered.

But Erasmus had anticipated Shakespeare by about one hundred years, not only in the thought but in its application, as we shall see by a perusal of some of his letters to Rome on this occasion. He first addressed himself to Raphael Riario, of whom we have already spoken as probably the most powerful Cardinal in Rome, the nephew of Pope Sixtus IV, and the cousin of the late Pope Julius II. He had already shown himself well disposed towards the interests of Erasmus; and we have very little doubt that it was through him that Gigli, the Bishop of Worcester, ambassador of King Henry at the Roman Court, had obtained from the late Pope, his uncle, the gift of his Doctor's degree at the University of Turin, as related on a previous page, and the still more appreciated favor of being permitted to hold benefices in spite of his defect of birth. So he addresses him as follows, though lack of space prevents us from reproducing more than a small part of the lengthy letter:

> For some time the whole of St. Jerome is being printed, yea, is being born again, a work hitherto so corrupt and mutilated that now it would seem to be not so much restored as produced for the first time. I have corrected it with immense labor, having collated it with many other copies, some of which are very ancient; and adding thereto *scholia* whereby it may be more easily read. You know how this author is stuffed here and there with matter which thwarts the reader by its obscurity. The Greek and Hebrew I have either restored or corrected. The counterfeit and supposititious books, which chance or some impostor has added thereto, I have not lopped off, but have relegated them to a special volume. etc. This huge work as printed will make about ten volumes, I imagine; and it is printed at such an expense and such an amount of care, that I dare swear no work these twenty years has ever left a publisher's office gotten out with such cost, or in such an elaborate manner. . . . I have expended so much labor on this task that I have almost killed myself, in order to give this new birth to Jerome. . . .
>
> I have not yet decided, but will do so when I have heard from

you, to whom I shall dedicate it. I owe everything to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he deserves that every page of mine should celebrate his praise, but, on the other hand, I plainly see how appropriate it would be that the prince of all theologians should be consecrated to the prince of all Pontiffs; nay, more, that all good literature should flourish again under the auspices of him by whom peace, the foster-mother of literature and study, has been restored to humanity. I know that no little commendation will accrue to my Jerome from the name of Leo; and I also know that the dedication of my studies on this great man to the Pontiff will contribute to his honor. But I will speak of these things with you personally, and with greater care and detail. Meanwhile, I beg you in any event to continue to be the same patron to Erasmus that I ever found you to be when I was at Rome. If any occasion should arise in which you would not feel indisposed to make use of the services of such an insignificant client as myself, especially with the Archbishop of Canterbury, I will show you that, whatever else may be lacking, fidelity and diligence assuredly will not.[11]

In a very similar strain he addresses Cardinal Grimani on the same subject, sounding him on the advisability of the dedication to the Pope, and adroitly showing at the same time that he was not lacking a patron of lofty position to whom to dedicate his works, should he deem it inexpedient to dedicate them to Leo:

Moreover, it seemed to me to be very appropriate that this greatest theologian should come forth under the happy auspices of this greatest Pope, so restored that he would seem never to have been hitherto published at all; and that the most learned of all writers should appear to the world with the commendation of him whose family has furnished to us so many illustrious literary lights. For as it would happen that, on account of the authority of so distinguished a Pope, much splendor and dignity would accrue to St. Jerome, so, in like manner, a large accession of glory would inure to Leo from the celebrity of so eminent a doctor. And, in truth, I cannot see how in any other way I can better consecrate to immortality his glorious deeds. Therefore to him will I consecrate this newborn Jerome, especially if your wish commends my judgment. For in a way I had almost decided to dedicate it to the Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom I owe everything. Although I know very well that he would willingly and joyfully yield whatever of glory there might be in it to the Roman Pontiff, yet his mind is set on it. But I will so couple his memory with the praise of Leo, the best with the greatest, the Primate with the Pope, that in this way it will be better both for my Jerome and for the fame of my Maecenases. . . . London, May 15, 1515.[12]

Whether these two Cardinals acquiesced in his design of dedicating the works to the Pope and advised him to do so, we are unable to say;

[11] Eras. Ep. 333.

[12] *Ibid.*, 334, ll. 145 *sqq.*

but we do know that he did not wait for a reply from them, for, with the impatience that characterized him whenever he wanted anything very urgently, only a few days afterwards he wrote his famous letter to Pope Leo X, from which we will take a few excerpts, its length precluding complete reproduction here. Drummond seems to have been surprised that

> . . . The daring satirist, who had not scrupled to attack the Pontiffs themselves for their degeneracy from the example of the Apostle whose successors they professed to be, addressed Leo in a more servile tone than might have been expected, telling him he surpasses the rest of mankind in majesty as much as men surpass the brutes.[18]

We really cannot see any good reason for Drummond's surprise in the matter, for Erasmus was considerable of a tufthunter and made very little attempt to hide the fact. The servile tone of his language to the Pope is due either to hypocrisy or to the manner of the age, as a certain amount of adulation is visible in all the correspondence of his contemporaries. And though such a tone was common to the men of those days, we must not assume that the recipients of this form of flattery were any the more gullible on that account. On the contrary, though they dealt out to each other honeyed superlatives, they were none the less hard-headed and suspicious of compliment. So that when Erasmus tells the Pope that he "outshines the glory of his Medicean ancestors," and then makes the statement that "by the splendor of those accomplishments by which you cast its former brilliancy into the shade you render it the more illustrious," we are apt to picture in our imagination the Pope as just then paying more attention to the glaring paradox contained in the above statement than to the expressed compliment. Likewise, when he says that "would it were permitted me to fly and kiss your most blessed feet," we may easily assume that Leo took this figure of speech for what it was worth and no more. And then Erasmus goes on:

> I behold and I hear everywhere where the Christian world extends the highest and the lowest congratulating themselves on this great Pope. And while all do this most appropriately, to none is it more fitting than to those who are endowed with a zeal for true piety and choice literature; because, in the first place, that noble Medici family, which, by the immortality of its name, will live forever, and to which the world owes Leo, has ever been the nurse and ornament of men illustrious by their probity and learning. From this family, as from a Trojan horse, so many noble men eminent in every sort of learning have in a few years sprung, so many Ciceros, Vergils, Platos, Jeromes, that even this omen alone ought to inspire the studious with the supreme hope that Leo has been given to the world by the providence of the Supernal Power, so that under him all the eminent virtues and all the fine arts may again flourish.

At this point the Pope must have begun to perpend the ultimate drift

[18] *Erasmus*, Vol. I, p. 265.

POPE LEO X

Detail from Raphaël

of the weighty sentences that his dear son Erasmus was uttering so eloquently. Erasmus was now comparing him to the perfect ruler as laid down by Plato, and congratulating him that there was no suspicion of bribery in his election to his sacred office. Moreover, he tells him that no sooner did the world perceive that Leo was at the helm of human affairs than all of a sudden this more than iron age turned to gold; and so great and so fortunate a change took place in everything that it was plainly evident all this emanated from the hand of God. Then he points to the fact that, while under Pope Julius the whole world was at war, now under Leo the whole world is at peace. Whereupon he asserts that Leo acquired more real greatness in persuading Louis of France to desist from war than Julius did in conquering that king, or at least in crippling him. This gives him a splendid and laudable chance to express his views on war in general; and if he carried Leo with him on this vital matter as he carries us of to-day, he accomplished a great work. But we must still remember that the Turk was at the gate of Christendom, and that the battle of Lepanto had yet to be fought. Erasmus was and is in advance of his time on this matter of war, for almost exactly four centuries after he wrote on the subject to Leo X the world beheld the greatest war it had ever seen, in which it was not a question of defending Christendom against the Turk, but of Christian nations on both sides, tearing at each other's throats. In Erasmus' day it was the infidel Turk who was threatening not only the Church of God, but all Christian states and governments as well. It was a contest of civilizations; and as Leo looked to the East where the danger loomed ominously he must have felt reassured in some measure that his predecessor Pope Julius had left him a practically unified Italy with which to meet the common enemy. So that when Erasmus told him in tones of exultation that the insolent Turks, "those savage beasts, will not withstand the roar of our Leo [Lion], and truculent though they be, they shall feel, yes, they shall feel the unconquerable strength of our gentle Leo, and they will be impotent before a Pontiff armed more with piety than with might of numbers, and who bears into battle the immortal assistance of the Heavenly Power," the Pope must have smiled indulgently. Drummond calls the above passage a burst of rhodomontade. We will not go so far as that; but considering the parlous times in which Erasmus wrote we would venture to say that he was a much better courtier than statesman. Leo was doubtless aware of this and admired Erasmus' sincerity on the subject of war, though he might at the same time have been tempted to do as Pope Julius II is alleged to have done under similar circumstances and have told him not to bother his head with what he did not understand.

But at length Erasmus comes to his reason for writing to the Pontiff, and relieves his mind as follows:

> I long perceived that St. Jerome among the Latins was so far the prince of theologians that he is almost the only one we possess who is worthy of the title; not that I contemn the others, but that

if they be compared with him, illustrious though they may be in some ways, they are, so to speak, obscured by his eminence. Moreover, he is so charged with distinguished accomplishments that learned Greece herself has hardly anyone to match him. What Roman eloquence, what skill in languages, what knowledge of all antiquity, of all history, was in this man! What a wonderful memory, what a happy mixture of everything, what a complete knowledge of mystic literature! Above all, what an ardor, what a surprising influence of the Divine Spirit! The result is that he delights by his eloquence, teaches by his erudition, and carries us away with him by his sanctity. And this writer whom we deem most worthy to be read by all is the one who has been so corrupted, so defiled, so polluted, that he cannot be understood even by the learned.

I perceived that it would be a most beautiful achievement if by my efforts so illustrious a Doctor were restored to the world. But I also perceived there would be so much difficulty in the matter, that it would need more than one Hercules to accomplish this, and I was so far from considering myself a Hercules, that I have some hesitation in deeming myself an ordinary man. However, I have undertaken this task at the earnest exhortation of many learned men, and at the constant request of many bishops, but more especially at the bidding of him who is not only my Maecenas, but that of all the learned and virtuous among the English—I refer to his lordship William, Archbishop of Canterbury, than whom that island holds no one more consummate in learning, integrity, or any of the things that go to add dignity to the episcopal office, nor more inclined by nature to promote the study of what is best. Moreover, in every matter pertaining to the dignity, greatness, and majesty of the Roman See, his zeal is so earnest that no man's can be more so. . . . Stimulated by the urging of such men, and especially relying upon the aid of Him who never fails to second any pious endeavor, I have again set myself to my interrupted task. I have assumed as my own particular share of this undertaking the book of his epistles, and have cleansed them from the stains which destroyed rather than defiled them; and this partly by means of ancient codices, and partly by my own discernment. The Greek passages, which were either lacking entirely or were incorrectly added, I have diligently restored. I have done the same for the Hebrew quotations, though not without assistance, since I have barely touched my lips to that literature. . . . All this has exacted such labor that I have almost killed myself in arduously endeavoring to make Jerome live again; nor shall I fear to affirm on my oath that it cost Jerome less toil to write his lucubrations than it has cost me to restore and illustrate them.

For some time past this great work has been proceeding assiduously at Basle, that learned city of Germany, where the whole of Jerome is being born again. It is being done in the printing office of Froben, than which there is none more accurate, or whence have

issued more good editions, especially of such works as pertain to sacred literature. The work is not the labor of one man, nor is the expense borne by one man; for on the other remains of Jerome which I have not myself undertaken (even if occasionally I help out not a little) many most erudite men have now long labored. Among whom is that most outstanding man, John Reuchlin of Pforzheim, in the three languages, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, almost equally skilled; in addition, so versed in every kind of learning that he can vie with the greatest. Whence deservedly Germany regards and venerates him as if a phoenix and as her unique glory. Immense service has also been rendered by Kuno of Nuremburg, a theologian of the Order of Preachers so called, a man most eminent in Greek literature and indefatigable in his diligence for promoting good learning. With these also must be mentioned Beatus Rhenanus of Schletstadt, an elegantly accomplished youth as well as an acute critic. But it is the brothers Amerbach who have been of the greatest service in this undertaking, since it is at their cost and by their efforts, in common with those of Froben, that the work is made possible; and it would seem that destiny had prepared their establishment for this very purpose, that by their care Jerome might again be restored to life. The father, a most worthy man, saw to it that his three sons should be well instructed in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. When he was dying he bequeathed this task to them as an inheritance, dedicating to it all the wealth he had. And these fine young men are now diligently obeying the wishes of their devoted parent in accepting the gracious duty he left them, and have so shared Jerome with me that what remains, in addition to the epistles, belongs to their especial province.

"But to what does all this tend?" your Holiness will ask. I was about to speak of that, your Holiness. No name is more celebrated than that of Jerome, and none more revered; and yet I see how much splendor, weight, and authority can be added to it; for while there is no glory brighter than that of Leo, it will still gain no small accession, in my opinion, if so rare, so great, and so famous a work shall again see the light and come into the hands of men under the happy auspices of your name. And it seems beautifully appropriate that all good literature, which is the offspring of peace, should flourish again under that Pontiff by whom leisure and peace, the promoters of study, have been given back to the world. Fit and proper is it also that the foremost Doctor of the Christian religion should be dedicated to the supreme head of that same religion, and that the best of all theologians should receive the commendation of the best of all Popes. But I am not unaware how scrupulously everything that is to be dedicated to your Holiness should be examined, since it is necessary that what is to be offered to your patronage should be worthy of that patronage. However, if I shall feel that in this matter I have your Holiness' favor, it will be my desire to consecrate to Leo not only these lucubrations, but also the entire results of my future studies. For myself I expect no other reward

for my arduous toil than that of seeing Christian piety promoted by these works of Jerome which have been restored by my industry, since He will abundantly reward me for whose sake I have undertaken this arduous task. Jerome will be read all the more as he is rendered intelligible to the many; and he will be read all the more willingly if he shall have received the sanction of so great a Pontiff. May Christ, who has given you to the world, preserve your Holiness to us and to the entire Church as long as possible, and ever lead you on by happy gradations to greater things. . . . London, May 21, 1515.[14]

This epistle to Leo X, couched in a Latin which was reminiscent of the Augustan age, reached the Pontiff in due time; and, after perusing it, he so far did honor to Erasmus' scholarship that he handed the letter to his secretary Sadoleti, at that time probably the best Latinist in Rome, in order that a courteous reply in the same elegant Latin might be made to it, conveying to Erasmus his own personal compliments and the assurance of his high esteem.

Beloved son, health and the Apostolic benediction. We have been greatly pleased with your letter to us dated at London, because it brought to us not only your pledge of affection, but also the high opinion in which you hold us, two things which are most grateful to us. And both these things are the more noticeable because they come from no ordinary man, but from a man who is most learned and admired by us, and whom we have known when we were engaged in the minor offices of the Church, and whose praise comes commended to us by the high integrity and the lofty eloquence of the writer. Wherefore we desire you to be well persuaded that we shall receive this evidence of your kindness and good will towards us whenever the occasion is offered to our paternal charity; and we shall endeavor that our own studies shall be consonant with the high opinions you hold in regard to us. Would that the great Author of all good things, not of deeds alone, but of minds, who has elevated us to this extreme summit of dignity without any remarkable merit on our part, but honoring us solely out of His liberality and prudence, since He has wished us to desire those things which make for the best interests of the Church and are best suited to it—would that He might secure the way on which the course must be run by us in the restoration of virtue and true piety among men! Indeed, some things have already been attempted by us which you have kindly touched on in your letter, but greater and far more difficult ones remain, for which there is especial need of the divine assistance. If we shall be thus aided, we shall take care that those who think well of us and our character shall seem to have done so with accurate judgment.

But God will in His mercy see to this. We shall await the *Epistles of St. Jerome,* adorned by your care, with a certain pleasant eagerness; and your promise, by which you bind yourself to dedicate to

[14] Eras. Ep. 335.

us the fruits of all your studies, we shall consider the greatest possible gift and shall be grateful to you accordingly. Moreover, we hold our venerable brother the Archbishop of Canterbury in much affection for this reason, that, in fostering your virtues by his kindnesses, he is bearing remarkable testimony to his own virtue and dignity. And because you are far away, and in that island where a king holds sway who is most illustrious, and because he is our son and is attached to us and to the Apostolic See in every way, we are writing a letter to him in your commendation, which, with a copy of the same, we have ordered to be sent to you, so that they may be delivered to him if you deem it advisable. On account of our common zeal and affection for good literature, but especially on account of your character and learning, we desire very much that our liberality may be a source of honor and profit to you on every occasion, just as our good will towards you demands and your character merits.

Given at Rome from St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, July 10, 1515, in the third year of our pontificate. Sadoleti.[15]

This letter was no doubt read over to the Pope by his secretary Sadoleti. We may assume that Leo gave it an approving nod, and the letter was dispatched to Erasmus which was to give him so much pleasure, and to which he referred triumphantly whenever hereafter there was question of his orthodoxy or standing in the Church. To have obtained it was a stroke of genius on his part, and none so well as he could foresee its future value to him. Some of Erasmus' biographers speak slightingly of the Pope's liberality because he sent only an empty letter; but they are only looking at the matter very superficially and fail to see that what the Pope had done was to close every hostile mouth and silence every carping tongue. Nor did he rest satisfied with that, but, true to his promise to Erasmus, he wrote a letter to King Henry, from which we give one or two paragraphs:

. . . Influenced by such reasons, we highly esteem our beloved son in the Lord, Erasmus of Rotterdam, whom we place in the highest ranks of learning and erudition. He was known to us intimately long ago when we were serving in the minor offices of the Church; but since that time he has been not only known, but also greatly admired, for the monuments of his genius which he has enshrined in literature. He has sent us from England, where he is now living, a letter overflowing with dutiful observance, all the more grateful to us because it carries with it from him a testimony to your own virtue and magnanimity, as to which nothing could be more pleasing to us in consideration of our perfect good will towards your Majesty.

Hence we have deemed it proper to commend him to your Majesty, not because we seek any special favor for him at this time, nor does he ask such at our hands; but it is our special wish in behalf of those in whom we are cordially interested to hope from

[15] *Ibid.*, 338.

> others who are able to give a similar good will and benevolence. It will therefore be exceedingly acceptable to us, should he desire any grace, favor, or kindness from your Majesty, that, besides that liberality which you bestow on him of your own accord, you will also show him that such has been greatly increased by this our commendation. While this will be very grateful to us, it will also be, we think, greatly honorable to your Majesty.
>
> Given at Rome, . . . July 10, 1515. . . . Sadoleti.[16]

By a singular mischance his design of dedicating his *St. Jerome* to the Pope was upset. It would appear that war had so disturbed conditions in Lorraine, whence paper was derived for the Basle printers, that none was obtainable from that source. Eventually a supply was procured from Strassburg, and the work proceeded. The matter of paper in a work like the *St. Jerome* was of considerable moment, as it was to consist of nine bulky volumes, while the paper for the *New Testament,* which was to consist of one volume only, was more easily obtainable. The result was that, contrary to his expectations, the *New Testament* was issued first. Now he had promised to dedicate this last work to Archbishop Warham, and it was his desire to do so. On the other hand, he foresaw that, while the *St. Jerome* was not a work the nature of which would provoke controversy, the *New Testament* might possibly be expected to arouse criticism more or less severe. How much better then it would be for him to fortify his position by launching the *New Testament* under Pope Leo's auspices. This would forestall criticism and disarm his enemies at one and the same time, and he would dedicate the *St. Jerome* to Archbishop Warham later on. Having to decide quickly in the matter, he chose this latter plan, and determined to dedicate the *New Testament* to Leo X . But immediately he was assailed by inward fears that the Archbishop might become displeased at this sudden change of dedication and so withdraw his patronage. This would indeed have been a calamity; but, as we have often seen in the past, Erasmus was very resourceful in difficulties; so he thought out a way to please all parties and displease none. He would dedicate the *New Testament,* as being the only thing available, to both the Pope and the Archbishop. This would seem to most of us a rather risky thing to do, but Erasmus trusted to his smooth and persuasive eloquence to carry the thing off successfully. Apparently he succeeded, for we find nothing in his correspondence which might lead us to think otherwise. Let us quote the passage in his letter to Leo by which he accomplished this clever thing:

> But, that there may be a wider diffusion of the utility of this work of mine, it has seemed to me proper to use the public attraction which your name exerts on all, particularly as the fitness of the thing demands it. For it would be very appropriate that this Christian philosophy should be imparted to all mortals under the auspices of him whose office it is to defend religion, and that this heavenly doctrine might come to every man through the means of him by whom

[16] *Ibid.,* 339.

Christ has wished us to receive whatever is of aid in lifting men from earth to heaven. So now, what need prevent us from issuing this work into the hands of men supported by this double commendation, and thus more happily and auspiciously, and dedicating it in common to the two noblest men in the whole world? since we likewise see that more majesty and veneration is added to our altars and churches by dedicating them to more than one saint. Although this may seem an innovation, what matter, as long as it is conducive to the public good? And such is the modesty and kindness of Leo, that he appears no less great in a matter of this sort than he does in those wherein he far surpasses the very greatest. Such too is the eminence of the Archbishop in all the heights of dignity, that in every regard there is no colleague more suitable to the great Leo. Finally, if I may be permitted to brag a little, however humble my work may seem, I yet feel that the attentive reader will perceive it to contain more on close perusal than it promised on the first glance. But lest by any longer communication I may be trespassing on the public welfare by thus delaying your Holiness, occupied as you are in a constant solicitude for the entire world, I will arrange the rest with the public reader. But first let me pray to Him by whose providence Leo X has been selected to alleviate the affairs of mortals, that He will leave him with us as long and as happy as possible.[17]

This childlike manner of throwing himself on Leo's generosity and kindness must have made the Pontiff exchange a quizzical glance with his secretary Sadoleti when they had finished this confiding epistle; and it must have been with an amused and indulgent smile that he intimated his willingness to share with Archbishop Warham the honor which was being thus boldly thrust upon him. Erasmus was very proud of the way in which he had managed the delicate matter, and was already building on the Pope's favorable reply to the extent that he had further edited and enlarged on his letter to Leo and had sent it to be printed in order to show his standing with the Pope. The answer would be naturally sent to London, for they did not yet know in Rome that Erasmus was at Basle; so, with his accustomed precaution, he wrote to Ammonius, who apparently handled his London correspondence in his absence, to let him know if an answer came that demanded his attention, but to handle the affair cautiously. He also informs Ammonius that, if his health permit, he will remain in Basle until Christmas; but, if not, he will go either to Brabant or Rome.[18]

Although the *St. Jerome* and the *New Testament* were not yet off the press, the stir that their coming produced throughout learned circles was extraordinary. It almost seemed that Erasmus was a new luminary visiting unwonted skies, and that everyone desired a view of the literary comet. Scholars from all the universities looked about for pretexts to write letters expressing admiration for his works and offering services, courtesies, and copies of their own lucubrations. Cardinal Riario told him that it would be a good time to return to Rome, no matter whether

[17] *Ibid.*, 384. [18] *Ibid.*, 360.

his ambition might be for emoluments or honors, neither of which, he naïvely added, were despised by Erasmus. He also declared that all men who were eminent sought Rome as a theatre in which to display their excellencies, and that only in that city was proper consideration shown them. This man belonged to one country and that man to another; but Rome was the common country of all men of letters, their fosterer and sustainer.

Gerbellius, Kuno, Rhenanus, Sapidus, and Nesen had given up their own literary pursuits in order to assist him in the work of putting his books through the press; and Zasius and Pirckheimer were sending him letters that would go to any man's head, couched in terms that were more suited to a demi-god than to an ordinary mortal.

But we are anticipating. His stay in England had been a very short one, nor have we been able to learn what was its main object, other than to see his patrons and, possibly, to examine some of the Greek codices in the English libraries for the purposes of his *New Testament*. In May we find him returning to Basle through Antwerp, where he first had Dorp's letter handed to him, mention of which we have already made.[19] Socially his visit had not been a success, for we find him begging Richard Pace to intercede for him with some of his English friends, notably Grocyn and Linacre.

> Dear Pace. I certainly trust, such is the generosity of your disposition, that you will be always my friend, nor cease to be so because you may be more fortunate on that account. And I hope that you will be still more fortunate than you are. If my commentaries [the *Antibarbari*] have arrived, as I expect, carefully lay them away, or, what would be better, put them into More's custody, until I ask for them. Try to retain Linacre's friendship for me, and also even Grocyn's, if you are able. I do not write thus because I fear anything or expect anything of profit from them, but because I desire such men to be my friends always. They do not need any praise of mine; yet I dare say, that not even among the English is there one who thought more nobly or spoke more honorably of them than Erasmus. It is not pleasant to remember what both of them, I know not at whose instigation, attempted against me; and this I found to be a fact, not something which I conjectured, although I had long surmised it. But we are human; I shall always be like myself and place against this injustice of theirs their many benefactions to me. Of Linacre I have made honorable mention in my notes to the *St. Jerome*. It is not a great thing to despise those who despise you, to hate those who hate you. To vie in kindness and not in hatred is more worthy of learning. With his lordship of York, show yourself to be Pace whenever the opportunity shall offer. Take care of your health. Basle, September 4, 1515.[20]

What the cause of their falling away from Erasmus was we know not. It may have been the result of their having read his *Praise of Folly*, the

[19] See pages 317 *sqq.*

[20] Eras. Ep. 350.

knowledge of which ill-starred book was now becoming more generally diffused. Or it may have been that he did not respond to the Englishmen in frankness and candor, and that they admired his scholarship while entertaining no high regard for him personally. Possibly they did not like his method of exploiting his friends, for we have seen Colet and Fisher somewhat restive under his way of acting in that respect. We miss the kindly references to Linacre and Grocyn that used to characterize his letters of the years gone by; and correspondence between them becomes ominously lacking. As a result of his appeal to Pace, he ventures to write a few lines to Linacre, which are couched very timidly and which seem to have closed permanently all relations between them; and we are forced to the conclusion that Linacre had surprised him in something not quite friendly or upright. The reader may judge from the letter:

> Although it was already known to me, yet it was most pleasant to learn from More's letter that you were so amiably disposed towards me, although I do not deserve it. The *New Testament* so pleases the learned everywhere, even among the ranks of the theologians, that the unlearned are silent from shame. The sudden advent of a fever was the reason why I have not continued my voyage, especially as Dr. Ghisberto dissuaded me from it. I beg particularly that you will send me a description of the medicine that I took at your direction when I was in London, for my servant left the prescription with the pharmacist. It will be a great favor to me. More will tell you the rest. Farewell.[31]

Like all neurasthenics, he seldom allowed his medical friends to escape without taking toll of their skill and regard; but, if he did not recompense them with cash, he often paid them in Greek verses.

His fame was still increasing extraordinarily, and we note extremely flattering letters from Wolfgang Angst, Ulrich von Hutten, Paul Voltz, John Becar, John Caesarius, and many others, extracts from which will be given when necessary to illustrate our text. From a letter of John Becar of Borselen we learn incidentally that Erasmus had just been appointed one of the Councilors to Prince Charles, with a stipend of two hundred florins and duties merely nominal. This probably solaced him in some measure for the loss of the canonry in the cathedral of Tournai which he had been promised by Wolsey, who had been made bishop of that See on its capture by the English, only to have the promise later broken. John de Molendino, one of the resident canons, sent him the bad news about this time, but softened it by stating that Wolsey was going to give him a better office elsewhere. Sampson, who was Wolsey's secretary, was possibly no great friend to Erasmus, for he is alleged to have suggested to Wolsey that the canonry would be all the better filled if it were occupied by an Englishman rather than by this literary foreigner. It was a sore disappointment to lose this chance finally, after

[31] *Ibid.*, 415.

having it dangled before his eyes for so long a time; and he is expressing his real feelings on the matter when he tells Ammonius that "the making a fool of him grieved him more than the loss itself." [22]

So ends the year 1515, and with it most of Erasmus' peace. It was the eve of the publication of the *New Testament;* and from this time on he was fairly constantly embroiled.

[22] *Ibid.*, 378.

END OF VOLUME ONE